

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE



BALZAC

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\$7.50

Cambridge
1932

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The Physiology of Marriage

The Physiology of Marriage

By
Honoré de Balzac



London
Privately Printed

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of Milton."—Diderot*

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INTRODUCTION

MARRIAGE in no way owes its origin to Nature.—The family of the East is altogether different from that of the West.—Man is the minister of Nature, and society engrafts itself upon her.—Laws are made in the interests of morality, and morality is subject to variation.

‘Therefore marriage can be subjected to that gradual process of improvement which everything belonging to mankind seems to undergo.’

These words, which were spoken before the Council of State by Napoleon at the time of the debate upon the Civil Code, struck the present writer very forcibly, and sowed, perhaps without his knowing it, the seeds of the work which he is offering to the public to-day. Indeed, when at a much younger age I was studying French law, the word ‘Adultery’ made a strange impression on me. It was writ large in the Code, and the word never presented itself to my imagination without bringing a dismal array of fancies in its train. Tears, shame, hatred, terror, secret crimes, bloody wars, fatherless families, misery, would all be conjured up and suddenly present themselves before me as I read the significant word, ‘Adultery’! Later in life, when I had gained a place in the most highly cultured society, I realised that adultery did not uncommonly mitigate the severity of the marriage laws; I found a far greater number of unhappy than of happy marriages, and I considered myself to be the first to observe that, of all human relations, that of marriage was the least advanced. But it was the observation of a young

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man ; and, in my case, as in the case of so many others, like a stone cast upon the bosom of a lake, it was lost in the whirlpool of my tumultuous thoughts. And yet, almost unbeknown to myself, I continued to observe, and a swarm of ideas, more or less true, upon the nature of things matrimonial gathered slowly in my imagination. These ideas are perhaps built up in an author's soul in the same mysterious way as truffles grow in the perfumed plains of Périgord. One day a tiny thought, the expression of my ideas, was begotten of the holy horror with which I had originally been filled by the word 'adultery'—the outcome of a thoughtless remark. It was a satire on marriage : for the first time after twenty-seven years of married life, husband and wife had come to love another.

I amused myself for a while with this little book on matrimony, and spent a delightful week in working into this innocent trifle the mass of ideas which, to my great astonishment, I found I had acquired. The joke was ruined by the criticism of an authority, and, always ready to learn from advice, I fell back upon my life of unconcerned idleness. Nevertheless this modest beginning alike of knowledge and of humour gradually grew to perfection in my fields of thought; every sentence of the condemned work took root and gathered weight, and it remained in my mind, just as a little branch of a tree, if left on the ground on a winter's night, will be found next morning covered with strange white crystals which the frost has so freakishly fashioned. Thus the first sketch grew and became in its turn the starting-point of many offshoots, all relating to morals and manners. Like a polypus, it was bred out of itself. The impressions of my youth, the observations which I was enabled to make, found support in the most trifling events. Gradually this mass of ideas became welded in harmony ; they seemed endowed with real life, ready to traverse those imaginary lands where the soul

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delights to let her wayward offspring wander. Amidst the anxieties of the world and of life, I heard again and again a voice as from one within me making the most mocking discoveries at the very moment when with the greatest pleasure I was watching a woman dancing or smiling or chatting. Just as Mephistopheles, at the awful assembly on the Brocken, pointed out the evil faces to Faust, so the author, in the heart of a ball-room, would feel a demon tap him familiarly on the shoulder and say, 'Dost thou see that charming smile?—it is a smile of hatred.' At one time the demon would strut about like a captain in one of Hardy's old comedies; he would tear the purple embroidery from his cloak and endeavour to trim it anew with gold lace and tinsel. At another he would raise a free and hearty Rabelaisian laugh, and trace upon the wall of some street a word serving as the companion to 'Clink,' the only oracle which the sacred bottle ever utters. This literary Trilby would often appear seated on piles of books, pointing wickedly with his crooked fingers to two yellow volumes with a dazzling title. Then, having gained the author's attention, in tones as piercing as those of a harmonica, he would spell out the words: 'Physiology of Marriage'! But more often than not he would come at night, at dream-time; and then, like a good fairy, he would endeavour to subdue the soul which he had singled out with gentle words and caresses. He was as much a scoffer as a tempter; supple as a woman, and cruel as a tiger, his friendship was more to be dreaded than his enmity; he could not embrace without hurting. One night, having tried the power of all his spells, he crowned them with a final effort, and he came and sat on the edge of the bed as might a young girl whose heart was full of love, who sits with shining eyes, silent at first, but is certain in the end to disclose her secret.

'Here,' said he, 'are the details of a cork-jacket by means of which you may walk dry-footed on the Seine.'

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This second volume is the Institute's report on a dress which enables you to go through fire unburnt. Can you not propose anything that may render marriage indifferent to heat and cold? But listen! here we have the Art of Preserving Food, the Art of Preventing Chimneys from Smoking, the Art of Making good Cement, the Art of Putting on a Tie, the Art of Carving.'

In a minute he had named such a prodigious number of books that, as I listened, I was overcome with a feeling of giddiness.

'These myriads of books have all been devoured,' he said, 'and yet all the world does not build nor eat, all the people in the world do not wear ties, nor can all warm themselves, whereas all do get married—to a certain extent! . . . But look!'

Here he made a movement with his hand, and seemed to expose to view a distant sea, where all the books of the century, moving to and fro, rose and fell like waves. The 18mo's rebounded; the 8vo's, as they were thrown in, fell with a thud to the bottom, and only came to the surface again with difficulty, being hindered by the 12mo's and the 32mo's which swarmed on every hand and dissolved into light foam. The wild surge was a mass of journalists, foremen, paper-manufacturers, apprentices, printers' clerks, of whom only the heads were visible, jumbled together among the books. Shouts as of schoolboys bathing went up from thousands of voices. Men were passing hither and thither in canoes, engaged in fishing for the books, bringing them to shore and placing them in front of a tall, disdainful-looking man, clad in black, who, standing dry and cold by the water-side, represented the libraries and the public. The demon pointed out a skiff newly-decked with flags, running with full sail, and flying for ensign a placard, which, with a sardonic laugh, and in a piercing voice, he read out,—'The Physiology of Marriage.'

Upon my falling in love the devil ceased to molest me,

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for he would have more than met his match had he come to a house in which a woman dwelt. Several years passed, free from all torments save those of love, and I believed myself cured of one infirmity by another. But one night I met him in a salon in Paris, where one of a group of men standing round the fire began, in sepulchral tones, to relate the following tale :—

‘ The event which I am about to describe happened when I was at Ghent. A woman, who had been a widow for ten years, lay on her bed stricken with a mortal disease. Her three heirs, who were the next of kin, never left her bedside for fear she should make her will in favour of a Convent in the town, and were eagerly awaiting her last breath. The sick woman lay silent and only half conscious, and death seemed slowly to be gaining mastery over her stiff and livid features. Picture to yourselves the three relatives seated in silence round the bed on a winter’s night. An old nurse stood by, shaking her head, and the doctor, as he anxiously watched the disease entering upon its last stage, took his hat in one hand, and with the other made a sign to the relatives, as if to say, “ I shall not have to pay any more visits.” So silent was it that one could hear the muffled sound of the snow as it rustled down upon the shutters. Thinking that the light might hurt the woman’s eyes, the youngest of the three had improvised a shade round the candle placed near the bed, and the circle of light from the flame hardly reached the gloomy pillow on which the woman’s yellow face stood out like a half-gilt figure of Christ upon a cross of tarnished silver. The light that leaped from the blue flames of a bright fire was the only other light in this sombre room where a tragedy was so soon to be enacted. Suddenly a piece of live coal rolled out on to the carpet, as if to announce that the end was near. At the noise the invalid sat bolt upright and opened wide her eyes which shone like those of a cat in the dark. Everybody stared at her in amazement. She watched the coal roll

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along, and before any one could even think of attempting to prevent what could only be a kind of mad frenzy, she jumped out of bed, seized the tongs, and threw the coal back into the fire. The nurse, the doctor, the three relatives, all dashed forward to take hold of the dying woman; they lifted her back into bed again and laid her head on the pillow; a few minutes later she died, and after her death she lay staring at the patch of pattern on the carpet where the coal had fallen. No sooner had the Countess Van Ostroem breathed her last than the three co-heirs, looking at one another distrustfully, and thinking no more about their aunt, pointed to the mysterious spot on the carpet. As they were Belgians, a glance was enough to decide them. Three words were uttered in a deep voice, and it was arranged that none should leave the room. A servant went in search of a workman. The Belgians were very much agitated as they stood together on the handsome carpet and watched the carpenter make the first incision with his chisel and lift the plank.

“My aunt moves!” cried the youngest heir.

“No, it is but the effect of the light,” answered the oldest, who kept his eye on the supposed treasure and on the dead at the same time.

‘In the very spot to which the brand had rolled, the afflicted relatives discovered a body cunningly encased in a coating of plaster.’

“Proceed,” said the older heir.

‘The apprentice’s chisel then brought to light a man’s head, and by the help of some little scrap of clothing they were able to identify the Count, who had died, so the whole town had thought, at Java, deeply mourned by his wife.’

The man who related this old tale was tall and spare, with pale yellowish eyes and brown hair, and I thought I could discern in him a vague resemblance to the demon who had so grievously tormented me in days

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gone by, only in this instance the stranger had no cloven foot.

Suddenly the word 'adultery' sounded on my ears, and there before my eyes, awakened in my imagination as it were by a bell, lay the most mournful of the faces that hitherto had always followed in the wake of those bewitching syllables.

What I may call the phantasmagoria of persecutions of a work which did not exist began from that evening forward again to trouble me ; and at no other time of my life have I been assailed by so many false ideas on the fatal subject of this book. But I resisted the spirit bravely, despite the fact that the latter associated the most insignificant incidents of life with this unknown work, and that like a Custom-house officer, he contemptuously stamped everything with his seal. A few days later, I found myself in the company of two ladies. One of them had been one of the kindest and most witty women of the court of Napoleon. In her early days she had attained to a high place in society, but the Restoration, coming upon her unawares, had been the means of her downfall. She was now living the life of a recluse. The other, young and beautiful, was at the moment playing the part of a woman of fashion in Paris. Since one was forty and the other twenty-two, their respective pretensions rarely brought their vanity face to face, and for this reason they were friends. The one had realised that I was of no importance to the other, and they continued quite openly to carry on in my presence a conversation which they had begun upon their '*métier de femme*.'

'Have you noticed, my dear, that women as a rule only love fools ?'

'My dear Duchess, what do you mean ? How do you reconcile such a statement with the aversion they have for their husbands ?'

'Marriage is a tyranny !' said I to myself. 'Surely it is simply the keeping of a devil in a mob-cap !'

'No ! I am not joking,' replied the Duchess, 'and

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from the time when I began to meditate coolly upon those whom I had known in my youth, I confess I have often trembled for myself. To intelligence belongs a dazzling brightness which wounds us ; it may be that the man who is richly endowed with it frightens us ; and if he is proud, he will not stoop to jealousy, and therefore he will fail to please us. We seem to prefer, in the long run, to raise a man to our level rather than have to mount to his. . . . The man of talent achieves successes which we may share, but the fool brings us pleasures ; and we would always rather hear it said of our lover, "What a very handsome man!" than hear that he has been elected to the Institute.'

'Enough, Duchess, enough! You appal me,' and the young coquette began to call to mind the lovers whom the women of her acquaintance doted upon, and discovered that there was not a single intelligent man among them.

'Why, upon my honour,' said she, 'their husbands had better——'

'They *are* their husbands,' gravely replied the Duchess.

'But is the misfortune that threatens the husband of France inevitable?' I asked.

'Yes,' answered the Duchess, laughing. 'And the bitter animosity which women feel towards those who happen to have the dear misfortune to have a passion, shows how great a burden to them their chastity is. Were it not for fear of the devil, one woman would be a Laïs, another owes her virtue to the coldness of her heart, another imitates the stupid way in which her first lover comforted himself, another——'

I stayed the torrent of these revelations by communicating the project of the work by which I was persecuted. The ladies smiled and promised me plenty of advice. The younger gaily furnished an essential paragraph in the enterprise by saying that she would undertake to prove mathematically that entirely

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virtuous women were reasonable beings. 'Go home with her,' said I to my demon.

'Come! I am ready. Let us sign the contract.'

The demon never came back.

It is not in any way in arrogance that the author is here setting down the biography of his book. He is recounting what may serve as a description of human thought, and doubtless explain the work itself. It may not be uninteresting to anatomists to learn that the soul is feminine. And so, however much the author forbade himself to think of the book which in the end he had to write, it revealed itself to him everywhere. One page he found on the bed of a sick man; another on the sofa of a boudoir. A woman's looks as she was borne round in a waltz would give him ideas; a movement, or a word, and immediately his brain would teem with satire. On the day when he said to himself, 'This work which is tormenting me shall be written,' it all vanished, and, like the three Belgians, he stooped down to snatch a treasure and picked up a skeleton.

After the tempting demon there came a pale, gentle figure, kindly and attractive; her images were free from the sharper barbs of criticism. She was lavish of words rather than of ideas, and she seemed to take fright at the least sound. Maybe she was the familiar spirit of the deputies who sit in the centre of the 'Chambre.'

'Were it not better to leave things as they are?' said she; 'are they so very bad? We ought to believe in marriage as we believe in the immortality of the soul, and to write a book on conjugal happiness is certainly not your intention. You may find husbands willing to surrender their wives to you, but no son would ever give up his mother. . . . Those who are wounded by the opinions you hold will suspect your morals, and question the integrity of your intentions. A man must be a King, or at least a First Consul, if he would treat of social diseases.'

I did not listen to Reason, although appearing in a

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form most likely to please me, for in the distance Folly stood shaking the bauble of Panurge, and I wanted to catch hold of it ; but when I tried to take it, I found it as heavy as the club of Hercules ; and besides the Curé de Meudon had decorated it in such a manner that a young man who prides himself less on writing a good book than on being well-gloved, could not touch it.

‘ Is our work finished ? ’ asked the younger of my two accomplices.

‘ Alas, madam ! will not my only reward be the hatred that it will call up against me ? ’

She shrugged her shoulders, and I emphasised my irresolution by assuming an expression of carelessness.

‘ Do you hesitate ? Publish it, man, and have no fear. Nowadays we accept a book on account of its style rather than its matter.’

Although I put myself forward as the humble secretary of two ladies, the task of merely arranging their observations has been considerable. There remains, perhaps, one more task with regard to marriage : to gather together those things which all the world thinks and no one expresses ; but to make such a study of the mind of the world would surely be to run the risk of not pleasing any one. Yet it may be that the eclecticism of this study will save it from such a fate. By the aid of a good deal of raillery I have endeavoured to popularise certain consoling notions and I have nearly always tried to awaken unknown resources of the human soul. In undertaking the defence of the most material interests, either appreciating or condemning, I may have brought to light more than one intellectual pleasure. But I cannot feel satisfied that I have always succeeded in keeping my pleasantries within the bounds of good taste ; I count on receiving as much blame as praise, for such things depend on different attitudes of mind. The subject-matter is of so serious a nature that I have frequently endeavoured to relieve it by anecdotes ;

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nowadays anecdotes are morality's passport and a safeguard against dullness in all books. Weariness on the part of the reader at the constant repetition of ' I ' is inevitable with a book of this description, made up as it is of analysis and personal observation. This repetition is one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a book, and I am not blind to the fact. I have therefore arranged the outlines of my long study in such a manner as to afford the reader resting-places, a system which has been sanctioned by a writer who has written a book on ' Taste ' similar to this of mine, and from it I shall allow myself the pleasure of quoting a few words that express a thought which we both have in common. In so doing I render homage to my famous predecessor, whose death followed so close upon his success.

' When I write and speak for myself in the singular, imagine that I am having a familiar talk with the reader ; he can scrutinise, discuss, doubt, and even laugh ; but when I arm myself with the redoubtable " we," I am the teacher and he must bow before me.'—
BRILLAT-SAVARIN : Preface to the *Physiologie du goût*.



THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

PART I. GENERAL REFLECTIONS.

‘We rail against foolish laws until they are reformed, and in the meantime we submit to them blindly.’

DIDEROT, *‘Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville.’*

FIRST MEDITATION.

THE SUBJECT

PHYSIOLOGY, what would you with me ?

Do you aim at proving that marriage joins together for a lifetime two beings who do not know one another ?

That in passion there is life, and that no passion can hold out against marriage ?

That marriage is a necessary institution for the maintenance of society, but that it is contrary to nature ?

That divorce, which seems to alleviate the evils of marriage, should be unanimously recalled ?

That, despite its inconveniences, marriage is the prime source of propriety ?

That it supplies governments with innumerable pledges of security ?

That there is something pathetic in two young people joining together to support the pains of life ?

That there is something ridiculous in thinking that one thought can govern two wills ?

That woman is treated like a slave ?

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That marriage is never entirely happy ?

That marriage is weighed down with crime, and that the criminals who are found out are by no means the worst ?

That, to man at any rate, fidelity is impossible ?

That if a system of evolution could be invented, it would show that there was more dissension than security in the transmission of estates and patrimonies ?

That adultery brings more evils than marriage brings blessings ?

That woman's faithlessness dates back to the earliest times, and that marriage has to contend for ever against breaches of confidence ?

That the laws of love bind two people together so firmly that no human law can separate them ?

That if some marriages are entered in official registers, others are contracted by nature's vows, on account of a conformity of opinion or an utter lack of conformity, or on account of some bodily conformity ; that thus heaven and earth are in everlasting opposition ?

That there are husbands, tall and of superior intellect, whose wives have lovers who are ugly, short, or stupid ?

All these questions would, if necessary, furnish matter for books ; but the books are all written and the questions settled once for all.

Physiology, what would you with me ?

Are you going to unfold new principles ? Are you about to contend that women ought to be public property ? It has been tried by Lycurgus and by some of the Greek nations, by the Tartars and the savage races ;

Or that women ought to be kept in confinement ? The Ottomans used to shut up their women, but they are setting them at liberty to-day ;

Or that girls should bring no dowry to their marriage, and that they should be excluded from any rights of inheritance ? Certain English writers

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and moralists have proved that this, together with the possibility of obtaining a divorce, is the surest way to produce happy marriages ;

Or that a young Hagar is a necessity in every household ? No law is needed for that.

The article in the Code which lays down the punishment for adultery, whatever the motive of the crime, and which only punishes the husband provided his concubine lives in his house, implicitly admits mistresses in the town.

Sanchez has discoursed on all the penitentiary crimes of marriage ; he has even argued for the legitimacy and expediency of each pleasure ; he has stated the whole duty of the husband, moral, religious, and physical ; indeed, if his great folio *De Matrimonio* were reprinted, it would run to twelve octavo volumes.

Swarms of lawyers have poured forth swarms of tracts on the legal difficulties arising out of marriage. There are even to be found books on the legal congress.

Legions of physicians have published legions of books on marriage in its relation to surgery and medicine.

In the nineteenth century, then, the physiology of marriage is but an insignificant compilation ; or, indeed, the work of a simpleton written for simpletons. Aged priests have taken their golden balance and weighed the smallest scruples ; aged lawyers have put on their spectacles and discriminated every possible species ; aged physicians have applied their scalpel to every sore ; aged judges have mounted the bench and come to a decision on all the redhibitory cases ; whole generations have passed by with their cries of joy or grief ; every century has cast its vote into the urn ; the Holy Spirit and the writers of prose and the writers of poetry have recorded everything—from Eve down to the Trojan War, from Helen to Madame de Maintenon, from the wife of Louis XIV. to la Contemporaine.

What, then, would you have of me, Physiology ?

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Would you, perchance, put before us a series of pictures all more or less well drawn, to convince us that a man marries—

For ambition (*ambition*) we know that well enough ;

Out of kindness (*bonte*), to rescue a girl from the tyranny of her mother ;

Out of anger (*colère*), to disinherit collateral heirs ;

Out of scorn (*dédain*) for a faithless mistress ;

From weariness (*ennui*) of the delights of a bachelor's life ;

Out of folly (*folie*) it is the same ;

For a wager (*gageure*)—Byron's case ;

For honour (*honneur*), like George Dandin ;

From self-interest (*intérêt*),—but this is nearly always the reason ;

On account of youth (*jeunesse*) on leaving college, from thoughtlessness ;

On account of ugliness (*laideur*), fearing to find himself without a wife altogether one fine day ;

From machiavelism (*machiavelisme*), in order quickly to inherit an old woman's wealth ;

Out of necessity (*nécessité*), to give *our* son a status ;

To oblige (*obligation*) the lady, who is delicate ;

For passion (*passion*)—permanently to be cured ;

On account of a quarrel (*querelle*)—to put an end to a law-suit ;

Out of gratitude (*reconnaissance*) : in this case he gives more than he gets ;

From prudence (*sagesse*)—the way with the pedantic ;

Because of a will (*testament*)—an uncle dies and encumbers your inheritance with a daughter whom you have to marry ;

From habit (*usage*), in imitation of our forefathers ;

From old age (*vieillesse*), to put an end to it all ;

(X is missing ; the reason it is used for an unknown quantity may be because it is so seldom found at the beginning of a word.)

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For yatidi (*yatidi*)—the hour of retiring, denoting to the Turks the realisation of every desire ;

Out of zeal (*zèle*), like the Duc de Saint-Aignan, who did not wish to commit a sin.

But these accidental reasons have supplied subjects for thirty thousand comedies and a hundred thousand novels.

Physiology, for the third and last time, what would you with me ?

With us everything is as commonplace as the paving-stones in the streets, as hackneyed as four cross-roads. Marriage is better known than Barabbas ; all the ideas which it calls up have been circulated in our books since the world began, and there is no useful opinion, no absurd scheme, but it finds an author, a printer, a library, and a reader.

Permit me to address you in the words of Rabelais, the master of us all :

‘ Good people, God save you and keep you ! Where are you ? I cannot see you. Wait while I put on my spectacles. Ah ! now I see you. Are you, and your wives and children, in good health ? I am pleased to hear it.’

But I do not write for you. Since you possess grown up children, you know all that there is to know.

‘ It is you, my thrice-famous drinkers, you, my dear gouty ones, you, my indefatigable spongers, my drunken minions, who live the life of epicures the whole day long, and with your gay private jackdaws go to all the prayers—to nones, to vespers, to compline—verily to all.’

It is not for you that the Physiology of Marriage has been written, for you are not married. Amen !

‘ You, you sybarites, canting bigots, vagabonds, hypocrites, sneaks, cudgellers, bucks, pilgrims, and such like, who are disguised as masqueraders to cheat the world ! . . . to heel, hounds ; get out of the way ! Away, pudden-heads ! What, are you still there, in the devil’s name ? ’

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The good souls who are fond of a hearty laugh are perhaps all who are left me. Not the whimperers who would drown themselves in verse or prose at every turn, who pretend to be ill in odes, in sonnets, and in meditations ; not indeed those dreamers, but some of the old pantagruelists who are not quite so particular as long as it is a matter of feasting and merry-making, and who highly approve of Rabelais's ' Des pois au lard, cum commento,' and of his ' De la dignité des braguettes.'

We must laugh no more at the government, my friends, since it has found the means of raising fifteen hundred millions in taxes. Clergymen, bishops, monks, and nuns are not yet rich enough to allow of their drinking at home among themselves ; but only let St. Michael, who drove the Devil out of heaven, appear, and we shall perhaps see the good old times come back again ! And so at the moment there remains no matter for laughter in France but marriage. Disciples of Panurge, I would have you and you only for my readers. You know how to take up or put down a book to some purpose, you know how to follow the easiest course, you can read between the lines, and draw sustenance from a bone.

Have the censors, those men of the microscope, who see no more than a pin's point, said their last say ? Have they passed everything in review ? Have they laid down, without appeal, that it is as impossible to write a book on marriage as to make a broken pitcher whole ? Yes, Master Fool. Squeeze marriage as much as you like, you will never extract anything from it but fun for bachelors and boredom for husbands. This is the everlasting result of marriage. A million printed pages would contain nothing further. Nevertheless, here is my first proposition : Marriage is war to the knife, and before entering upon it man and woman should ask heaven's blessing, for it is most rash to undertake to

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love for ever. The struggle is not long in coming, and victory—that is, liberty—goes to the cleverer of the two.

Agreed. But is that a new idea?

Well, I address myself to the married couples of yesterday and to-day—to those men who, as they leave the church or the Town Hall, entertain the hope of keeping their wives to themselves; to those who, from a certain kind of egoism or some feeling which it is impossible to define, can say at the sight of the misfortunes of others, ‘That will never happen to me!’

I address myself to sailors who put out to sea, though they have seen other vessels founder; to those who have dared to get married though they have themselves wrecked the virtue of more than one good wife. And now for the subject—ever new, ever old!

A young man, or an old man, perhaps, has but lately acquired possession of a young girl by a contract duly registered at the Town Hall, before heaven and on the rolls of the estate—a young girl with long hair, limpid black eyes, small feet, dainty tapering fingers, red lips, ivory teeth, and a good figure; tremulous, tempting, white as a lily, laden with all the treasures of loveliness imaginable; her drooping eyelashes resembling the sharp points of a crown; her skin, as fresh as the corolla of a white camelia, tinted with the purple of the darker-hued camelia; on whose clear complexion can be seen the bloom borne by young fruit, and the well-nigh invisible down of the dappled peach, her blue veins spreading a rich warmth over this transparent network; she asks for life, she is ready to give life; she is full of love and joy, of gracefulness and simplicity. She loves her husband, or at least she thinks she loves him. . . .

The lover and the husband has said in his heart, ‘These eyes shall see me only, for me alone shall this mouth quiver with love, this soft hand shall bestow the treasures of fleeting pleasure only upon me, this bosom heave but at my voice, but at my will shall this sleeping soul awake; I alone shall run

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my fingers through these shining tresses, I alone cover this eager, trembling head with dreamy caresses. I will make Death keep watch by my pillow to defend the nuptial-bed from the spoiler ; this throne of love shall swim either in the blood of the unwary or in my own. Rest, honour, happiness, paternal bonds, the fate of my children, all lie there ; I will guard them as a lioness guards her whelps. Woe to him who puts foot in my lair !'

Well, my brave athlete, we commend your resolution. Up to now no geometrician has dared to trace the lines of longitude and latitude of the sea of wedlock. Husbands of long-standing have shrunk from pointing out the sandbanks, the reefs, the rocks, the breakers, the monsoons, the coasts, and the currents which have destroyed their barques, so ashamed are they of their own wrecks. Married travellers have long been in need of a pilot and a compass This book is meant to supply one.

There are, without counting grocers and drapers, so many people who, to kill time, occupy themselves in seeking for the hidden motives which direct women's actions, that it is a work of charity to classify by titles and in chapters all the private circumstances of marriage ; a good index will enable them to put their finger on the motions of their wives' hearts, just as logarithmic tables give them the product of any two numbers. What do you think of it ? Is it not a novel enterprise to which any philosopher might devote himself, that of showing how a woman may be prevented from deceiving her husband ? Is it not a comedy of comedies ? Another *speculum vitæ humanæ* ? It is no longer a question of those trifling matters to which justice has already been done in this meditation. In the region of morality, as in that of the exact sciences, the century asks to-day for keen observation and for facts. We bring you both.

Let us then begin by considering exactly how things

THE SUBJECT

stand, and by analysing the strength of both parties respectively. Before we arm our imaginary champion, we will ascertain the number of the enemy and count the Cossacks who threaten his little territory with invasion.

Let who will come on board with us, he who can shall laugh. Weigh the anchor, hoist the sail ! You know what tack you are on, which is a great advantage.

As for our fancy for laughing and crying and for crying and laughing, like Rabelais, drinking when eating, and eating when drinking—as for our mania for introducing Heraclitus and Democritus on the same page ; for not troubling about style, or thinking out our phrases . . . if any of the crew complain ! . . . clear the decks of the old pudden-heads !—the classicists in swaddling clothes, romanticists in winding-sheets, and let come what come may ! These fellows will perhaps blame us for our resemblance to those who say gaily : ‘ I am going to tell you a tale that will make you laugh ’ . . . A find thing, indeed, to make fun of, is marriage ! Can you not see that we are looking on it as a mild form of disease to which we are all subject, and that this book is a monograph upon that disease ?

But as for you, with your drudgery or your work, whichever you like to call it, you remind me of those postillions who crack their whips as they set off with a fresh relay, because, forsooth, they have an Englishman on board ! You have not galloped half a mile before you have to get down to put a trace back in its place, or to let your horses breathe. Why sound the trumpet before the battle is won ?

Yes, but, dear pantagruelists, it is enough to-day only to have pretensions, and success is ensured ; and as, after all, great works are perhaps only small ideas spun out, I do not see why I should not try to gather my laurels, if for no other purpose than that of using them to wreath those salt hams that help us to swallow our wine. —A moment, pilot ! A definition before we start.

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Readers, if from time to time you come across in this book, as you do in life, 'virtue,' and 'virtuous women,' let virtue be understood to mean that painful facility with which a wife reserves her heart for her husband only ; unless the word be used in a general sense, a distinction which it is left to the reader's wit to discern.

SECOND MEDITATION.

MATRIMONIAL STATISTICS.

THE Administration has been engaged for about twenty years in estimating how many hectares of woodland, meadowland, vineyard and fallow-land there are in France. Not content with this, it has sought to know the number of animals, and their kinds. Statisticians have gone farther : they have calculated the number of stères of woodland, kilogrammes of beef, litres of wine, and the number of eggs and apples consumed in Paris. But no one has ever taken it into his head, either on behalf of the honour of the husband, or in the interests of those about to marry, or for the benefit of morality or the perfecting of human institutions, to endeavour to estimate the number of honest women. The ministry could, if asked to do so, give the number of men under arms, the number of spies, employés, scholars ; and yet, with regard to virtuous women—it has nothing to say ! If a king of France took it into his head to seek among his subjects for his august consort, could the Administration tell him how many pure white ewes there were for him to select from ? He would set people laughing by being obliged to have recourse to some establishment for young ladies.

Are the Ancients to remain our masters in moral as well as in political institutions ? History tells us that

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when Ahasuerus wished to take a wife from among the maidens of Persia, he chose Esther, the most virtuous and the most beautiful. His ministers must have found some means of setting on one side the cream of the population. Unfortunately the Bible, which is usually so clear on matrimonial matters, has omitted to state the law by which the marriage choice was made.

We will try to make up for this deficiency on the part of the government by comparing the number of women in France with the total number of inhabitants. In this we claim the attention of all friends of public morality, and we appoint them judges of our method of procedure. We will try to be liberal enough in our evaluation and sufficiently accurate in our reasoning for all the world to acknowledge the truth of our results.

Thirty million is the number usually taken as representing the inhabitants of France.

Some scientists think that the number of women exceeds that of the men ; but inasmuch as many statisticians are of the opposite opinion, we are more likely to be right if we take the number of women to be fifteen million.

First, we must deduct from the total number about nine million, who at first glance seem to resemble women well enough, but whom after a closer examination we are compelled to reject. Let me explain.

Naturalists only consider as man the single genus of the order *bimana*, set down by Duméril on the sixteenth page of his *Zoologie Analytique*, to complete which Bory-Saint-Vincent has thought fit to add the genus ape.

If these two zoologists regard us simply as mammiferous beings, with thirty-two vertebræ, a hyoïd bone, and more folds in the hemispheres of the brain than any other animal ; if, in their eyes, there exist no other varieties in this order than those introduced by climatic influences, which give names to fifteen different species (scientific terms which need not here be cited):—the

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physiologist for his part ought also to have the power of setting up his genera and his sub-genera, according to the varying degrees of intelligence and to the conditions of living, whether moral or pecuniary.

Now the nine million whom we are here considering seem at first sight to possess all the characteristics usually attributed to the human species : they have the hyoïd bone, the coracoïd beak, the zygomatic acromion and arch. The members of the Jardin des Plantes may classify them as *bimana*, but our physiology will not allow us to admit that they are women. For us, and for those for whom this book is intended, a woman is an uncommon variety of the human genus, whose chief physiological characteristics are here set forth. It is a species which owes its existence to the particular care which man, thanks to the power of gold and the zeal for goodness which is begotten of civilisation, has been able to bestow upon its cultivation. She can usually be recognised by the whiteness, the smoothness and the softness of her skin. She has a penchant for exquisite cleanliness. She has a horror of her fingers touching anything but objects that are smooth, soft and scented. Like the stoat, she will die of grief if her white coat is sullied. She loves to smooth her hair, to scent it with an exhilarating perfume, to polish her pink nails, to cut them almond-shaped, to bathe her tender limbs many times a day. At night she is content only with the softest down, only with horsehair divans during the day ; she falls most easily into a recumbent attitude. Her voice is sweet and penetrating, her movements graceful. She talks with a wonderful facility. She does no hard work of any kind, and yet in spite of her seeming feebleness there are burdens which she is able to bear or cast off with an almost miraculous ease. She flies from the glare of the sun and has ingenious ways of protecting herself from its heat. Walking tries her ; it is a mystery whether she eats or not ; whether she shares the appetites of other species is a problem.

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Excessively curious, she can easily be taken in by any one who wishes to hide the least little thing from her, for her spirit is for ever urging her to seek after the unknown. To love is her religion ; she thinks only of pleasing him whom she loves. To be loved is the object of all her actions, the object of all her movements to arouse desire. Thus she thinks only of finding means of shining ; she only moves in a medium of grace and elegance ; it is for her that the young Indian spins the soft hair of the goats of Thibet, and the Tartar weaves veils as thin as air, that Brussels plies the shuttle laden with the purest and finest flax, that Visapore contends with the bowels of the earth for its brilliant gems, and Sèvres gilds its white clay. She thinks about new costumes day and night, and spends her life in having her dresses starched and in crumpling her fichus. Fresh and radiant, she goes forth to show herself to strangers, whose homage flatters her, whose desires charm her, even though they themselves are objects of indifference to her. The hours stolen from attending to her person, or from enjoyment, she spends in singing sweet little airs ; it is for her sake that France and Italy arrange their delightful concerts and that Naples endows strings with souls of harmony. She is, in a word, queen of the world, and the slave of a desire. She dreads marriage because in the end it spoils the figure, and yet she gives way to it because it promises happiness. It is the purest chance that she has children, and when they grow up she conceals them.

Are these characteristics, which I have chosen at random from a thousand, found among creatures with hands as black as monkeys, and skin as tanned as the old parchments of a parliamentary register ; whose faces are burnt by the sun and whose necks are as wrinkled as a turkey's ; who are clothed in rags ; who have harsh voices, no intelligence and an intolerable smell ; who think of nothing but their hunk of bread ; who are for ever bent towards the earth ; who dig and

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harrow, make hay and glean, reap and knead bread, and peel hemp : who, with animals, children and men, live huddled together in holes, scarcely covered with straw ; to whom, indeed, it matters little how the children swarm ? They have many, and they hand them in their turn over to toil and misery ; and if their love is not a labour like that of the fields, it is at any rate a speculation.

Alas ! If there are in the world tradeswomen who sit all the day long among their candles and moist sugar, farmers' wives who milk cows, wretches who are treated like beasts of burden in the factories, or who carry a hoe, or a fruit or fish basket on their backs ; if, unfortunately, there exist all too many low creatures for whom the life of the soul, the blessings of education, the tumultuous emotions of the heart are a paradise which they can never hope to reach, and if nature has willed that they have a coracoïd beak, a hyoïd bone, and thirty-two vertebræ—then they must be reckoned in the genus ape, as far as the physiologist is concerned ! Here we treat only of idle women, those who have leisure and a spirit to love ; of the rich, who have purchased the rights to their passions ; of minds that have the monopoly of idle fancies. Confusion seize all who do not live in the mind ! ' Raca,' if not ' Rabble ' to all who are not ardent, young, beautiful, and passionate. This is the public expression of the inmost feelings of those benefactors of mankind who know how to read and how to enter a carriage. In the nine million whom we have proscribed, doubtless the tax-gatherer sees tax-payers—the magistrate, persons who may be brought to a court of justice—the law-maker, citizens—and the priest souls ; but the man of feeling—the carpet philosopher, as he eats his white roll made of the wheat which these poor creatures have sown and reaped—will reject them, just as we do, from the genus woman. For them no women exist save those capable of inspiring love ; there exist only those who have been

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made members of the priesthood of thought by a liberal education, in whom leisure has developed the power of imagination ; only those, in short, whose souls dream as much of intellectual as of physical enjoyment in love. And yet it is only right to add that the female pariahs produce from time to time myriads of peasant girls, who, for some odd reason, are as pretty as one could wish them to be ; they go to Paris or to the large towns and end in being ranked among genteel women ; but for these two or three thousand privileged exceptions, there are a hundred thousand others who remain servants or who follow disorderly lives. Nevertheless, we will take these village Pompadours into consideration in our estimate of the female population.

Our first calculation is based on this discovery in statistics—that there are in France eighteen million poor, ten million in easy circumstances, and two million rich.

There are, then, only six million women in whom men of feeling are, have been, or will be interested. Let us submit this cream of society to a philosophical examination.

It is our belief, and we venture to hold it without fear of being thought mad, that men who have been twenty years married ought to be able to sleep peacefully, and without any dread of an invasion of love, and of the scandal of a lawsuit. From these six million, then, we must subtract about two million, who are thoroughly good women, because after forty years or more they must have seen something of the world ; but, since they have not succeeded in stirring any man's heart, we need have nothing to do with them. If they are so unfortunate as not to be sought after for their amiability, boredom overtakes them, and they give themselves up to religion, or cats, or little dogs, or other manias which are offensive only to God.

An examination of the calculations made at the

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Bureau des Longitudes authorises us to subtract another two million of lovely young girls from the total ; these are in the spring-time of life, and they play innocently with other children, with no thought that the ill-shapen rogues who now make them laugh will one day make them cry.

Now, for the sake of these two million women who remain, what reasonable man will not surrender to us the hundred thousand poor wretches, hump-backed, ugly, crotchety, stunted, sickly, blind, diseased, poor but well brought up, who are all old maids, and thus in no way offenders against the holy marriage laws ?

Would any man refuse us the hundred thousand more maidens who become sisters of Sainte-Camille, sisters of charity, nuns, governesses, companions, and so on ? But in this sainted company we must place the young people who are too old to play with young men, and yet too young to scatter their garlands of orange-flowers—and their number is hard to fix.

Finally, from the fifteen hundred thousand in the bottom of our crucible, we will take five hundred more units—the daughters of Baal, who give pleasure to the less particular. We will even include, without fear of their spoiling one another, kept women, milliners, shop-girls, haberdashers, actresses, singers, opera-girls, ballet-dancers, servant-mistresses, waiting-maids, &c. Most of these women, to be sure, arouse the passions, but they consider it indelicate to apprise a notary, a mayor, a priest, and a number of merry-makers of the day and the hour that they give themselves over to their lovers. Their system, which is rightly blamed by our fastidious society, has this advantage, that it puts them under no obligations either to mankind, to M. le Maire, or to the law. Moreover, since they do not hold fealty to any public oath, these women take no part in a labour that is looked on as sacred in legitimate marriages.

It may be said that we claim very few for this section, but it will make up for the sections which the un-

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initiated may consider exaggerated. If, out of love for her, any one should wish to have a rich dowager included in the remaining million, he will find her under the head of sisters of charity, opera-girls, or hump-backs. Indeed, we have cited only five hundred thousand in this last category ; for it often happens, as we have seen above, that the nine million peasants add very largely to its number. We have omitted the working-class and the tradeswomen for the same reason : the women of these two social sections are the fruit of efforts which bring forth nine million female bimana, doomed to a life of striving upwards towards the higher regions of civilisation. Were it not for this scrupulous exactness, many people might regard this statistical meditation as a joke.

We had seriously thought of forming a little class of a hundred thousand individuals as a kind of sinking fund, and thus providing an asylum for the women who take an intermediate position, such as widows, for example ; but we have preferred to estimate liberally. One reflection will suffice to prove the correctness of our analysis.

A woman's life can be divided into three distinct periods : the first period begins in the cradle, and ends at the marriageable age ; the second covers the time during which a woman is connected with marriage ; the third begins at the critical period, a time when Nature, with a summons sufficiently brutal, bids the passions cease. As these three periods are practically equal in length, they should divide the given number of women into three equal parts. Thus, in a total of six millions, we find, neglecting fractions about which only savants need trouble, about two million girls between one and eighteen years of age, two million ranging from eighteen at least to forty at most, and two million old women. The whim of society has distributed the two million marriageable women under three great categories, as follows ; those who remain maidens for reasons already given ; those whose virtue

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matters very little to their husbands ; and the million legitimate women with whom we are concerned.

You see, by this fairly accurate estimate of the female population, that there are in France scarcely a million pure white ewes in the coveted sheepfolds about which the wolves hungrily prowl.

Let us pass this million women, whom we have chosen from among the best, through a sieve of another kind. To gain a truer appreciation of the amount of confidence a man ought to have in his wife, let us suppose for a moment that all these wives deceive their husbands. On this hypothesis, we must take away about a twentieth who, but lately married, will be true, at any rate for a little while, to their vows. Another twentieth will be ill—if we devote but a small share to human suffering. Certain experiences which are said to destroy man's dominion over the heart of women—the realisation of ugliness, sorrow, child-bearing—claim another twentieth.

Thoughts of adultery do not take possession of the heart of a married woman all at once, like a shot from a pistol. Even when sympathy gives rise to feelings of tenderness at first sight, there is always a struggle which, while it lasts, prevents a fresh addition to the sum total of breaches of faith in matrimony.

It is almost an insult to the chastity of France not to represent this fighting period as engrossing, in so naturally warlike a nation, a twentieth of its women ; but in that case we will suppose that there are women who, though they are ill, still keep their lovers round them, along with their soothing draughts, and that there are women at whose pregnancy certainly bachelors smile. In this way we make up for the chastity of those who fight for virtue.

For the same reason, we must not take it for granted that a woman abandoned by her lover finds another immediately ; but this deduction being necessarily less than the preceding one, we will estimate it at a fortieth.

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These deductions bring our total, when it is a matter of determining the number of women who betray their husband's confidence, down to eight hundred thousand.

Who at this moment is not ready to be persuaded that these women are virtuous? Are they not the flower of the land? Are they not all fresh, ravishing, radiant with beauty, youth, life, and love? To believe in their virtue is a social religion, for they are the ornament of the world and the glory of France. We must then look amongst this million for the number of honest women, the number of virtuous women.

This investigation and these two classes demand Meditations to themselves, which will form appendices to this one.

THIRD MEDITATION.

THE HONEST WOMAN.

THE above Meditation has demonstrated that we possess in France, roughly, a million women who are cultivating the privilege of inspiring passions which a gallant man admits with shame or hides with pleasure. It is upon this million that we, like Diogenes, must turn our lantern, if we would discover the honest women of the land.

This investigation leads us into several digressions. Two well-dressed young fellows—slim of body and with arms as round as those of a pavier's daughter, with boots of the very latest fashion—met one day on the boulevard, at the end of the Passage des Panoramas.

‘Why, it's you!’

‘Yes, my friend. Don't I take after myself?’

And they made merry together, more or less humorously, their wit on a level with the witticism which opened the conversation.

When they had looked one another over with the

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care and curiosity with which a detective tries to recognise a man from a description of him, and had satisfied themselves respectively as to the freshness of their gloves, as to their waistcoats, and the elegance of their neckties, when they were practically certain in their minds that neither had met with any misfortune, they linked arms ; and if they left the Théâtre des Variétés behind, they did not reach Frascati without having put a sharp question, which, freely translated, is : ‘ With whom are you taking up just now ? ’ It is the general rule that she is always a charming woman.

Where is the foot-soldier of Paris upon whose ear these words, out of the thousands uttered by the passers-by, have not fallen, like bullets on the day of battle ? Where is the man who has not seized one of those innumerable words, frozen in the air, of which Rabelais speaks ? But most men walk about Paris as they eat and as they live, without thinking. There are but few musicians clever enough to recognise the key of those few scattered notes, few practised readers of faces who can tell from what passion they proceed. To wander through Paris ! Truly a delightful, an adorable existence ! Strolling is a science, a feast of the eye. Walking is vegetating ; strolling is life. A pretty woman who has long been gazed at with burning eyes will be far more worthy of claiming a reward than the cook who asked the Limousin for twenty sous, with his nose all swollen from sniffing up tasty smells. To stroll is to enjoy oneself, to catch flashes of wit, to admire grand pictures of misery, love, joy, graceful or grotesque portraits ; to look into the depths of thousands of lives. If you are young, it means a life full of desires, fully realised ; if old, it is to live the life of the young over again, to enjoy their passions afresh. Moreover, to the categorical question which started us upon this diversion, how many different replies has not the skilled stroller heard ?

‘ She is thirty-five, but you would not say she was twenty ! ’ said a fiery young man with shining eyes,

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who, having just left college, wished, like Chérubin, to embrace everybody he met.

‘What then! Why, very luxurious people have dressing-gowns of fine linen and diamond rings for night wear!’ said a lawyer’s clerk.

‘She has a carriage, and a box at the Français,’ said a military man.

‘As for me,’ cried another, who was a little older, and seemed to be replying to some charge made against him, ‘it does not cost me a sou! A man of my appearance! What chance have you, my good friend?’

And he gives his companion a dig in the ribs.

‘Oh, you have no idea how much she loves me! But her husband is an awful fool. Buffon has described animals with a master-hand, but the biped called husband’

So nice to listen to if one happens to be married!

‘Oh, my dear fellow, like an angel!’ is the answer to a question discreetly whispered.

‘Could you tell me her name and point her out to me?’

‘No, she is an honest woman.’

When a young student has an intrigue with a coffee-house keeper, he tells you her name with pride, and takes his friends to lunch with her. If a young man loves a woman whose husband deals in the necessities of life, he will answer with a blush: ‘She is a linen-draper; the wife of a stationer, a hosier, a clothier, a clerk.’

But this confession of an intrigue with one of inferior rank, which had its birth among packages, sugar loaves, or flannel waistcoats, is always accompanied by a pompous panegyric on the lady’s fortune. The husband alone meddles with the business; he is rich; he has beautiful furniture; moreover, the beloved comes to her lover’s house; she has a cashmere shawl, a country house, and so on. In short, a young man never fails to have excellent reasons for his mistress becoming an honest woman very soon, if she be not one

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already. This distinction, the product of the refinement of our manners, has become as indefinable as the line at which good tone starts. What is an honest woman?

This matter touches too nearly the vanity of the woman and that of her lover, that even of the husband, for us to refrain from laying down some general rules which have been discovered only after prolonged observation.

Our privileged million represents a number of women who are all eligible for the glorious title, but not all chosen. The rules of the election are found in the following

APHORISMS.

I. An honest woman is necessarily a married woman.

II. An honest woman is less than forty.

III. A married woman who is *paid* for the favours she bestows, is not an honest woman.

IV. A married woman with a carriage of her own is an honest woman.

V. A woman who does her own cooking is not an honest woman.

VI. No matter how he has gained his fortune, when a man has an income of 20,000*l.* a year, his wife is an honest woman.

VII. A woman who says 'une lettre d'échange' for 'une lettre de change,' 'souyier' for 'soulier,' 'pierre de lierre' for 'pierre de liais,' who says of a man, 'what a rum card Mr. So-and-so is,' can never be an honest woman, whoever she may be.

VIII. An honest woman ought to have money enough to justify her lover in thinking that she will never call upon him for anything.

IX. A woman who lives on the third floor (houses in the rue de Rivoli and the rue de Castiglione excepted) is not an honest woman.

X. A banker's wife is always an honest woman; but

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a woman who sits in the counting-house cannot be honest unless her husband has a very large business and they do not live over the shop.

XI. The unmarried niece of a bishop may pass for an honest woman if she lives with him, for, if she has an intrigue, she is obliged to deceive her uncle.

XII. An honest woman is one whom a man is afraid to compromise.

XIII. The wife of an artist is always an honest woman.

By applying these rules, a native of the department of Ardèche can remove all the difficulties which may arise.

If a woman does not wish to do her own cooking, and happens to have received a splendid education, and has a taste for flirtation and constantly seeks opportunities of remaining for hours at a time in a boudoir, stretched on the sofa, and of living the life of the soul, she requires an income of at least 6000 francs in the country and of 20,000*l.* in Paris.

These assessments will give some idea of the real number of honest women to be found among our million, which was our rough estimate.

Now, three hundred thousand annuities at fifteen hundred francs, represent the sum total of pensions and life-interests paid by the Treasury, and the total income from mortgages.

Three hundred thousand landowners, who receive three thousand five hundred francs in ground-rents, represent the whole of the wealth derived from land. Two hundred thousand share the State budget and the Municipal and Departmental budgets, receiving fifteen hundred francs, after the necessary deductions have been made for the Debt, the clergy rents, the sum paid to our heroes at the rate of five sous a day, and that set on one side for their linen, accoutrements, victuals, dress, and so on.

Two hundred thousand fortunes made in commerce,

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from a capital of twenty thousand francs in each case, represent all the possible industrial institutions of France.

This gives us our million husbands.

But how many need we take into account of those who have incomes of only ten, fifty, a hundred, two, three, four, five or six hundred francs entered in the ledger and elsewhere?

How many householders who do not pay more than a hundred sous, twenty francs, a hundred, two hundred, or two hundred and eighty francs in taxes?

How many spendthrifts who are poor quill-drivers with salaries of no more than six hundred francs?

How many traders whose income is only imaginary; who, while rich in credit, are really not worth a halfpenny, who resemble sieves with the Pactolus flowing through them? How many merchants who have a capital of only a thousand, two thousand, four thousand or five thousand francs? O, trade . . . we give thee greeting!

Let us count more people happy than are really so, and divide this million into two: five hundred thousand families will have incomes from a hundred to three thousand francs, and five hundred thousand women will fulfil the conditions demanded by honesty.

In accordance with the remarks made at the end of our meditation on statistics, we are authorised to deduct a hundred thousand from this number. Consequently we can look upon it as a mathematical proposition that there exist in France only four hundred thousand women, the possession of whom supplies fastidious men with the exquisitely refined pleasures expected from love.

Here, indeed, is the place to remark to the connoisseurs for whom we are writing, that love is not made up of a few solicitous conversations, a few nights of pleasure, a more or less well-timed caress, and the spark of amour-propre known as jealousy. Our four hundred thousand women are not of the kind of whom it can be said: 'The most beautiful girl in the world only gives that which is hers to give.'

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No, they are richly dowered with the treasures which they derive from our heated imagination, and they know how to sell what they do not possess at a high price, to make up for the cheapness of that which they give away.

Do you experience more pleasure in kissing a gay young girl's glove than in spending in an ecstasy of pleasure the five minutes which all women allow you?

Will the conversation of a tradeswoman make you dream of infinite enjoyment?

With yourself and a woman who is beneath you, the delights of vanity are all on her side. You are not in the secret of the happiness you bestow.

With yourself and a woman who is above you, either in fortune or in social position, many are the 'ticklings' of vanity, and they are mutual. A man has never yet succeeded in raising his mistress to his level; but a woman can always raise her lover to hers. 'I can make princes, but you will never make anything but bastards'—is an answer that flashes true.

If love is the first of the passions, it is because it gratifies them all. A man loves with more or less passion according to the number of cords which his pretty mistress binds to his heart. Biren, the son of a goldsmith, getting on to the bed of the Duchesse de Courlande to help her sign a promise that he should be proclaimed lord of the land, just as he was already lord of his young and beautiful lady, is a type of the happiness which our four hundred thousand women should bestow on their lovers.

To gain the right of walking over the heads of all who jostle one another in a drawing-room one must be the lover of one of these choicest of women. Besides, we are all more or less fond of domineering.

Against this radiant portion of the nation are directed all the attacks of those men who, by education, talent or wit, have acquired the right to be considered somebody in that rank of life in which all men are

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‘somebodies,’ and the wife whose heart is defended at all costs by *my* husband is to be found only among this class of women.

What does it matter whether the regard claimed by our feminine aristocracy can be claimed alike by other classes of society? What is true of the manners, language, and thoughts of these distinguished women, in whom a taste for the arts, a faculty for thinking, comparing and reflecting has been engendered by a liberal education, who have such lofty feelings for politeness and the proprieties, and who direct the manners of France—ought to be true for women of all kinds and of all nations. The superior man to whom this book is dedicated, possesses, by means of a certain mental optics, the power of watching the light in each class grow dim, and of marking the point in civilisation at which the above observation still remains true.

Is it not then of great interest to morality that we should now investigate the number of virtuous women to be found among these adorable creatures—is it not a question of national import to husbands?

FOURTH MEDITATION.

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN.

THE question is perhaps not so much one of finding out how many virtuous women there are, as of deciding whether an honest woman can remain virtuous.

In order to make this point clearer, and since it is one of considerable importance, let us cast a rapid glance over the male population. From our fifteen million men, we will, to begin with, subtract the nine million bimana with thirty-two vertebræ and submit only six million to our physiological analysis. A Marceau, a Masséna, a Rousseau, a Diderot, and a Rollin spring up from time to time out of this social residue; but here we mean to be inaccurate in our calculations designedly. These errors will fall with all their weight upon the con-

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clusion, and corroborate the terrible results which the mechanism of the public passions is about to lay before us.

From six million privileged men, we remove three million old men and children. It may be argued that in the case of the women we here subtracted four million. The difference is easily justified, though at first sight it may seem strange.

The average age at which women marry is twenty, and at forty they cease to have anything to do with love.

Now a lad of seventeen can, according to the old chronicles, cut very vicious holes in the parchment of contracts, especially in the most ancient of them.

Again, a man is more formidable at fifty-two than at any other time of his life. At this mature period he uses his dearly gained experience and all the fortune he has. Since he writhes under the scourge of passions which are likely to be his last, he is as pitiless as a man who is being dragged along by a current and catches at a lithe young willow-branch, the first green shoot of the year.

XIV. Physically a man is a man for a longer time than a woman is a woman.

The difference in length of time between that part of a man's life which relates to love and marriage, and the corresponding part of a woman's life, is fifteen years. This period is about three-quarters of the time during which a wife's faithlessness can be her husband's misfortune. Yet the rest of the deduction made from our total number of men, compared with the number deducted from the women, only makes a difference of at most a sixth.

We put forward our calculations very diffidently. As for our reasons, they are so evident and so trivial, that we only set them down from a love of accuracy and a desire to disarm criticism.

It has then been proved to every philosopher, be he ever so poor a reckoner, that there exist in France

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roughly a mass of three million men between the ages of seventeen and fifty-two, all fond of good living, with good teeth, determined to bite—biting, in fact, and only asking that they may walk boldly and firmly along the road to paradise.

In accordance with our previous remarks, we may separate a million husbands from this total. Let us imagine for an instant that these men, as satisfied and as happy as our model husband is all his life, are content with the love of their married life.

But our two million bachelors do not need even an income of three-halfpence to make love on; in order to take a husband's portrait down from the wall, it is enough if a man has a good foot and a good eye;—it is not necessary that he have an attractive person, or even that he be well built;—if only he be witty, distinguished-looking, and *tactful*, a woman will never ask him whence he comes, but only where he would go.

Love's only luggage are the charms of youth; a coat from Buisson's, a pair of gloves from Boivin's, elegant boots (supplied in much trepidation by the manufacturer), a well-tied cravat—such are all a man needs to be king of a salon: do not soldiers, in spite of the fact that the infatuation for bullion and tagged lace has worn off a little, by themselves form a formidable bachelor legion? Not to mention Eginhard, who was a private secretary, did not a paper announce but a few days ago that a German princess had linked her fortune with a simple cuirassier lieutenant of the Imperial guard?

The village notary, who in the further end of Gascony passes but thirty-six acts a year, sends his son to Paris to make a way for himself; the hosier would have his son a lawyer; the attorney intends his for the magistracy; the magistrate would be a Minister, so that he may dower his children with a peerage. At no former time has there been so burning a thirst for knowledge. It is talent, and not wit, that goes a-begging nowadays. Bright flowers sprout in all the crannies

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of our social state, and in the spring-time they bloom on the ruined walls ; even in caverns, tufts of parti-coloured flowers may break through the vaulted roof and grow green, warmed by the rays of the sun of knowledge that have found their way into them. Since this great development of thought, this impartial and lavish dispersion of light, every man represents the sum total of the knowledge of his age, and one is seldom superior to another. We are surrounded by living encyclopedias, who walk, think, act, and strive after immortal fame. Whence these terrible attacks of soaring ambition and frenzied passion ! We need fresh worlds ; hives ready to receive these swarms ; and, above all, we need plenty of pretty women.

But, then, the ills to which man is heir produce no waste in the sum of his passions. A woman is never so dear to us as when we suffer—to our shame be it said ! . . .

At this, all the epigrams hurled at the weaker sex (for it is old-fashioned to call it the fair sex) ought to disarm themselves of their sharp points and turn into madrigals !

Men should consider that woman's only virtue is to love, and that all women are most truly virtuous—and close the book and all its meditations. Ah ! do you remember that black moment when, alone and suffering, railing at men, and above all at your friends, weak and discouraged, your thoughts set on death, your head resting on a hot pillow, your body lying on a coverlet of which the glazed calico so painfully marked your skin, you let your swollen eyes wander over the green paper of your quiet room ? Do you remember, I say, seeing her half-open your door without a sound, and show her fair young head, with its coils of golden hair, crowned with a new hat, looking like a star on a stormy night ? Do you remember seeing her smile and run towards you with a look at once sad and gay ?

‘ How have you managed it ? What have you told your husband ? ’ you ask. A husband ! Ah, here we are brought right back again to our subject !

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XV. Morally, a man is more often a man, and for a longer time, than a woman is a woman.

Yet we ought to remember that among the two million bachelors there are plenty of poor wretches whose love has been quenched by the profound realisation of their misery and their unending labours; that all do not go to college, and that there are plenty of artisans, and plenty of lackeys (the Duc de Gèvres, a very ugly little man, walking in the park at Versailles, caught sight of two or three valets with fine figures, and said to his friends: 'Think how we make use of those scamps, and how they make use of us'!), plenty of builders, plenty of manufacturers and plenty of shopmen, who think only of money.

That there are men stupider and really more ugly than God ought to have made them;

That there are men whose characters are without energy;

That the clergy are for the most part chaste;

That there are men so situated that they are not able to enter the dazzling sphere where honest women dwell, either from want of a coat, or because they are too timid, or in need of a showman to introduce them.

But we leave each one to add to the number of exceptions according to his own experience (for, after all, the aim of a book is to make men think), and we reduce the sum total to a half at once, and only acknowledge a million hearts worthy of offering their homage to honest women; and that is practically the number of superior persons in the world altogether. Women only love men of sense; but, we repeat, let us give fair-play to virtue.

Now, let us hear each of our good bachelors relate his adventures, all of which seriously compromise some honest woman. We shall be exercising true modesty and reserve if we allot only three adventures to each bachelor, for, although some count by tens, there are so many who have confined themselves throughout their lives to two or three passions, or even to a single one, that we have adopted

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a fresh distribution per head, as in our former statistics. Now, if we multiply the number of bachelors by the number of pieces of good fortune, we get three million adventures ; and, to face them, only four hundred thousand honest women !

If the God of goodness and of mercy Who hovers over the world, does not cleanse the human race once more, it is doubtless because of the poor success that attended the first cleansing. What a people ! what a society ! what a residue is this that remains after sifting !

XVI. Morals are the hypocrisy of a nation ; and hypocrisy is an art that has been brought almost to a state of perfection.

XVII. Virtue is, perhaps, no more than a kind of politeness of the soul.

Love is just as much of a necessity as bread, except that man is always eating, whereas in love his appetite is not so well sustained, nor is it as regular as the appetite he has for his meals.

A piece of brown bread and a jug of water would appease any man's hunger ; but our civilisation has created the art of good living. Love is, as it were, a piece of bread ; but there is also that art of loving which we call coquetry—that charming word, which only exists in France, the land that gave it birth.

May not a husband have reason for shuddering when he comes to think that man is possessed to so great an extent of an innate desire for changing his viands that travellers in savage countries have discovered such things as stews and alcoholic drinks ?

But hunger is not so violent as love ; yet the whims and fancies of the soul are far greater in number, and more harassing and more discriminating, than the whims and fancies of good living ; but all that history and the poets have revealed of human love seems to endow our bachelors with a terrible power ; they are like the lions of the Gospel, seeking whom they may devour.

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Let every one at this point question his conscience, conjure his memory, and ask himself if he has ever met a man who has confined himself to the love of one woman!

Alas! for the honour of the people, how can we explain this problem—three million burning passions with only four hundred thousand women to feed them? Must we apportion four bachelors to every woman, and conclude that the honest women have established instinctively a kind of rotation between themselves and the bachelors, like that invented by the presidents of royal courts for the purpose of passing their counsellors on through different rooms, one after the other, at the end of a certain number of years? A melancholy way of solving the difficulty!

Are we to go so far as to imagine that certain honest women act like the lion in the fable in sharing the bachelors? Why! at least half of our altars would be whited sepulchres.

Must we not take it for granted for the honour of the ladies of France, that in times of peace other countries, especially England, Germany, and Russia, introduce a certain number of their honest women? But the European nations would probably object that these are made up for by the fact that France herself exports a certain number of her pretty women.

Morality and religion suffer so much from such calculations that an honest man, in his desire to acquit the married woman, would like to believe, in this widespread state of corruption, that half of the number taken are dowagers and young people, or, better still, that the bachelors are liars.

But whither are our calculations taking us? We must not forget our husbands, almost all of whom are ashamed of the customs of the time and live like bachelors, glorying only in secret adventures.

In that case we think that every married man whose ideas of honour resemble those of his wife may as well look about for a nail and a rope; as old Corneille would say, '*fœnum habet in cornu.*'

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Yet it is from among these four hundred thousand honest women that, lantern in hand, we must seek for the virtuous women of France! As a matter of fact in our statistics of marriage we have only deducted the creatures with whom society is not really concerned at all. Is it not a fact that the well-bred, polite people of France make a total of scarcely three million, namely, one million bachelors, five hundred thousand honest women, five hundred thousand husbands, and a million of dowagers, children, and young girls?

Do Boileau's famous lines astonish you now? They show that the poet has cleverly fathomed the mathematical reflections set before you in these distressing meditations, and that they are not exaggerated.

Yet virtuous women do exist.

Yes, those who have never been tempted, and those who die in their first confinement (supposing that they were virgins when their husbands married them).

Yes, those who are as ugly as Kaïfakatadary in the *Arabian Nights*;

Yes, those whom Mirabeau calls 'fairy cucumbers,' who are composed of atoms entirely similar to those of the strawberry and the water-lily—yet trust them not!

And let us admit, for the credit of the century, that, since the restoration of religion and morality, and as time goes on, one does occasionally come across women so moral, so religious, so much devoted to their duties, so straight, so stiff and starched, so virtuous, so . . . that the devil himself dare not look at them; they are guarded by rosaries, prayers, and spiritual directors. . . . hush!

We will not attempt to classify virtuous women according to their stupidity, for it is acknowledged that in love all women are sensible.

Yet it may not be out of place to say that away in a corner somewhere or other there are women, young, pretty, and virtuous, in whom the world believes.

But do not allow the name of virtuous to the woman who has granted nothing to the lover whom she

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idolises in despair—she is fighting down an involuntary passion. It is the most deadly insult you can offer a loving husband. What part of his wife remains his? A thing without a name, a living corpse. In the midst of pleasures, his wife lives like the guest whom Borgia warned against the poisoned viands at a feast; he is no longer hungry, eats very little, or only pretends to eat; he looks back with regret upon the simple meal he has abandoned for that of the awful cardinal, and he longs for the time when the feast will be over and he can rise from the table.

What is the outcome of these reflections on feminine virtue? Here it is; the last two maxims have been given us by an eclectic philosopher of the eighteenth century.

XVIII. A virtuous woman has in her heart one fibre more or less than other women: she is stupid or she is sublime.

XIX. Woman's virtue is perhaps a matter of temperament.

XX. The most virtuous woman always has something within her that is not chaste.

XXI. 'That a sensible man may have doubts about his mistress is conceivable; but to have them about his wife! . . . would be too stupid.'

XXII. 'A man would be wretched, indeed, if, when in the company of women, he were to call to mind ever so little of that which he knows to be true about them.'

The number of rare women who, like the wise virgins in the parable, have kept their lamps well trimmed, will always be too small in the eyes of the defenders of virtue and the finer feelings; but it ought, all the same, to be subtracted from the sum total of honest women, and this deduction, consoling enough to us, renders the husband's danger greater still, the scandal more terrible, and the stigma on the rest of our lawful spouses the fouler.

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What husband of to-day could sleep peacefully beside his pretty young wife after hearing that three bachelors at least are lying in wait for her ; that, if they have not already laid waste his little property, they look upon a married woman as their own particular prey, which will fall to them, sooner or later, either by stratagem or by force, by conquest or of its own free will? And indeed it is impossible for them not to win the struggle in the end!

A most terrifying conclusion!

Purists in morals, straight-backed pedants in fact, may here accuse us of putting forward calculations of too distressing a nature ; they would take up the defence either of the honest women, or the bachelors ; but we have reserved a final remark especially for them.

Increase as you will the number of honest women and decrease the number of bachelors, you will still always find more gallant adventures than honest women ; you will always find an enormous number of bachelors confined by our customs to three kinds of crime.

If they remain continent, their health will be impaired, and they will suffer from very trying illnesses; they will set at naught the sublime views of nature among the Swiss mountains, and go and drink milk there and die of lung disease.

If they succumb to their legitimate temptations, either they compromise honest women—which brings us back to our original subject, or they degrade themselves by having intercourse with the women spoken of under the last category of the first meditation, and in this case there are further cases of travelling to Switzerland to drink milk and to die.

Have you never been struck, as we have, by a defect of organisation in our social order? An observation upon it will serve as a moral proof of our last calculations.

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The average age at which a man marries is thirty; the average age at which his passions, his most violent desires and longings are fully developed, is twenty. Hence, during the best ten years of his life, that springtime, as it were, when his beauty, his youth, and his inclinations render him most formidable to husbands, he has to remain without the possibility of finding any *legal* satisfaction for the irresistible longing for love which agitates his whole being. This period represents a sixth part of the span of human life, and we are bound to admit that at least a sixth of our men remain in an attitude as wearying to themselves as it is dangerous to society.

‘Why don’t they marry?’ cries a pious soul. But what sensible father would let his son marry at twenty, my good woman?

Are not the dangers of early marriages well known? It would almost seem as though marriage were a state at variance with the laws of nature, since it demands a peculiar ripeness of judgment. We all know what Rousseau has said: ‘Every one must sow his wild oats, in one way or another. It is bad yeast that ferments too early or too late.’

Besides, what mother of a family would without good reason expose her daughter’s happiness to the peril of this fermentation?

And what need is there to justify a fact under the dominion of which all societies exist? Is there not in every country, as we have shown, a large number of men who live a most honest life, irrespective of marriage or celibacy?

‘Cannot these men,’ the pious soul continues to urge, ‘restrain themselves as the priests do?’

Granted, madam.

Yet we must remark that the vow of chastity is one of the greatest exceptions to the natural state which society demands; that continence is the turning-point of the priest’s profession; that he must be pure

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just as a doctor must be insensible of physical ills, as the notary and the attorney of the misery which for their benefit discloses the wounds of the world, as the soldier is of the death which surrounds him on a field of battle. Because the needs of civilisation ossify certain fibres of the heart and harden the skin of certain membranes that should be able to reason, we ought not to conclude that all men must be made to submit to these partial deaths of the soul which are, after all, exceptional. It would be leading the human race to moral suicide of the worst order. If, however, in the heart of one of the most Jansenist salons possible, there should happen to appear a young man of twenty-eight who had kept his robe of innocence spotless, and was as untainted as the grouse on which epicures feast, cannot you see the woman of the most austere virtue paying him some little compliment on his courage, the most severe magistrate on the bench - lifting his head and smiling, and all the ladies turning away for fear he should see them laugh? When the heroic victim—who, by the way, is never really to be seen—has left the salon, what a deluge of jests rains down on his innocent head! What insults! In all France nothing is thought more shameful than impotency, coldness, absence of passion, simplicity?

The only king of France who would not have choked with laughter is perhaps Louis XIII.; but as for that green old gallant, his father, he might very well have banished such a youth, either because he was no Frenchman or because he thought he set a dangerous example.

Strange contradiction! A young man is equally found fault with, it seems, if he pass his life in 'holy land,' to coin an expression for the life of a bachelor. Is it perchance for the benefit of honest women that the prefects of police and the mayors have always ordained that public passions shall not begin until evening, and cease at eleven o'clock at night?

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Where can our bachelors sow their wild oats? And whom does one deceive—the governors or the governed, as Figaro puts it? Is society like the little boys at the pantomime, who stop their ears so as not to hear the guns go off? Does it fear to probe the wound? Or is the evil recognised as incurable and are things to be allowed to go as they please? But this is a matter for legislation, for it is not possible for us to escape the social dilemma which arises from the balancing and scheduling of public virtue on behalf of marriage. It is not for us to solve the difficulty; yet, suppose for a moment that society, with the object of preserving a certain number of families, a certain number of women, a certain number of honest girls, is compelled to grant by licence the rights of satisfaction to bachelors; ought not our laws to found a corporation for women who would, after the manner of Decius, sacrifice themselves for the republic, and make a rampart of their bodies to save the honourable families? Legislators have done very wrong up to now in disdainfully neglecting to make regulations for courtesans.

XXIII. If the courtesan is a necessity, she is at the same time an institution.

This matter bristles with so many ‘ifs’ and ‘buts,’ that we will leave it to posterity to solve; after all, we must leave them something to do. And besides, the solution is quite beyond the scope of this work; for to-day, more than at any other time, delicacy of feeling is on the increase; at no other period has there been such a display of fine manners, for it has never before been so fully realised that pleasure comes from the heart. Now what man of feeling, in the presence of four hundred thousand pretty young women, endowed with splendid fortunes and all the graces of the mind, rich in the treasures of coquetry and lavish of happiness, what bachelor, I say, would go and . . . ? Fie! for shame!

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Let us, for the benefit of our future legislators, briefly sum up the events of the last few years.

XXIV. In society, the mistakes which are inevitable are due to the laws of nature, in conformity with which man must conceive his laws, both civil and political.

XXV. 'Adultery is bankruptcy with this difference,' says Chamfort, 'that in this case it is the loser who is dishonoured.'

The laws relating to adultery and to bankruptcy in France are very much in need of modification. Are they too mild, or do they err in principle? *Caveant consules!*

Well, my brave hero, you who have taken to heart the short address in our first meditation to the man who is burdened with a woman, what have you to say? We trust that our way of looking at the question does not make you tremble; that you are not one of those men whose spine burns and whose nervous fluid freezes at the sight of a precipice or a boa constrictor!

Ah! my friend, he who owns land has no peace. Men covet your money far more than your wife.

After all, the husband is at liberty to take these trifles for serious calculations, or these serious calculations for trifles. Life's illusions are the most beautiful things in it. Our most trivial convictions are those most worthy of respect. Are there not people enough whose principles are only prejudices, and who, not having strength enough to conceive of happiness and virtue for themselves, accept ready-made happiness and virtue at the hands of the legislator? We must say again that we are only addressing those men who have, like Manfred, sown their wild oats too freely, and now, whenever they are tortured by a kind of moral spleen, wish to have all veils torn away. For them it is that the question has been so bravely stated, and we are fully

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aware of the extent of the evil. It remains for us to examine the various dangers which men may meet with in marriage, and, if possible, to render the struggle from which our champion is to emerge victorious, less fierce.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

THE FORE-ORDAINED.

By fore-ordained we mean ordained beforehand to happiness or unhappiness. Theology has taken possession of the word and uses it always in the sense of 'blessed;' we endow it with a meaning fatal to our chosen ones, of whom the opposite to the Gospel saying can be cited—'Many are called and many chosen.'

Experience has shown that there have been classes of men more subject to one kind of evil than another: thus, Gascons are given to exaggeration, Parisians are vain; just as apoplexy attacks people with short necks, carbuncles (a sort of plague) affect butchers, gout attacks the rich, good health the poor, deafness falls on kings, paralysis on administrators, so it has been observed that certain classes of husbands are more especially victims of illegitimate passions. It is these husbands and their wives who engross the attentions of the bachelors. They form an aristocratic class of a new kind. If any reader think himself one of this class, we hope that either he or his wife will have the presence of mind to recall the favourite maxim of Lhomond's Latin Grammar: 'There is an exception to every rule.' A friend might even add: 'Present company always excepted.' Thus every one would have the right to think himself an exception. But our duty, the goodwill we bear to husbands, and our earnest desire to save as many young women as possible from the disquieting fancies and the unhappiness which follow in a lover's train, compel us

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to point out one by one those husbands who ought especially to be on their guard.

In this list are first of all those husbands whose business, profession, or employment drive them from home at certain fixed hours, and for a certain fixed period of time. They, as it were, carry the banner of the brotherhood.

Amongst them are included magistrates, permanent or otherwise, who are obliged to remain at the Palais for the greater part of the day ; other functionaries sometimes find opportunities for leaving their office, but a judge or a king's proctor, seated on the royal lilies, would die rather than leave his post during a hearing. His tapestried seat is his field of battle.

Similarly situated are the deputies and the peers who discuss the laws, ministers who work with the king, directors who work with ministers, soldiers in the field, and, lastly, the corporal on sentry-duty, as Lafleur's letter in *The Sentimental Journey* proves.

After those who are compelled to be away from home at fixed hours, come the men whose occupations are of so important and serious a nature that they have no time in which to be amiable ; their foreheads are always careworn and their conversation seldom cheerful.

At the head of this troop we place the bankers, who slave away with their millions, their heads so full of calculations that eventually figures find their way out of the top of their heads and rise in columns above their foreheads.

These millionaires are for the most part forgetful of the laws of marriage and the care needed by the tender flower they are cultivating ; they never think of watering it, or protecting it from the heat or the cold. They hardly realise that a wife's happiness has been entrusted to them ; if they do remember it, it is at table, when they see in front of them a richly-dressed woman, or when the coquette, secretly dreading to approach them, comes to the counting-house for money—as gracious as Venus

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herself. Ah ! but then, in the evening, they will be pure enough to call to mind the rights specified in Article 213 of the Civil Code, and their wives will not be long in finding it out. But they bear with them, as one suffers the heavy tax which is put on foreign goods, and satisfy them by virtue of the axiom : ‘ There is no pleasure without pain.’

The learned men who spend whole months in gnawing an antediluvian bone, in estimating the laws of nature, or in spying into her secrets ; Students of Latin and Greek who dine on an idea of Tacitus, or sup on a phrase of Thucydides, who spend their lives in dusting their libraries, ever on the look-out for an emendation or a papyrus—are all fore-ordained. They are so thoroughly absorbed in their work, and they live in such an ecstasy, that they are not affected by anything that goes on around them ; their misfortune might work itself out in broad daylight, and they scarcely notice it. Happy ! A thousand times happy ! Let us take an example. Beauzée, returning from a meeting of the Academy, surprised his wife in the company of a German. ‘ When I kept telling you, Madam, *qu’il fallait que je m’en aille . . .*,’ cried the stranger. ‘ My dear Sir, at least say, “ *que je m’en allasse*,” ’ observed the Academician.

Next in order, with lyre in hand, come the poets, and in their case all the animal passions seem as it were to leave one floor and ascend to the floor above. They mount Pegasus more easily than Father Peter’s mare, so that, accustomed as they are from time to time to hurl their fury at a fickle Chloris, or a purely imaginary Chloris, they rarely marry.

But the men whose noses are discoloured with snuff ;

Or those whose noses are, to their misfortune, always running ;

Or sailors who smoke and spit ;

Or men whose bilious, dried-up characters give one

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the impression that they are perpetually eating sour apples ;

Or men who in private life have a cynical manner, or ridiculous habits, and a slovenly appearance whatever they may do to avoid it ;

Or husbands who earn the undignified title of warming-pan ;

Or, lastly, old men who marry young girls ;

All these are fore-ordained *par excellence* !

There is a last class of the fore-ordained whose ill-luck is practically a matter of certainty. We mean the men who are fidgety and irritable, meddling and tyrannical, and have a preposterous idea of household government ; who make no secret of thinking evil of women, and who understand life no more than cock-chafers understand natural history. When such men marry, their houses remind one of a wasp fluttering for a minute on a window-pane after it has been knocked on the head by a schoolboy. For this class of the fore-ordained this book is a closed letter. We write no more for fools such as these—mere walking statues, that look like church effigies—than for the old hydraulic machines at Marly, which would suddenly collapse if they were again to be used to furnish the groves of Versailles with water.

I rarely go to the salons to watch the matrimonial freaks that abound there without being reminded of a scene I enjoyed in my youth.

In 1819 I lived in a cottage in the heart of the lovely valley of l'Isle-Adam. My retreat was close to the Parc de Cassan, the most secluded, the most beautiful, the most charming place imaginable, and as cool in summer as any place could be. The old country-house belonged to a farmer-general of the good old times, one Bergeret, a man celebrated for his originality, who, among other eccentricities, used to go to the Opera with his hair powdered with gold, and would illuminate the park for his own edification, and sit down

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by himself to a sumptuous feast. This bourgeois Sardana-palus had come back from Italy with so great a passion for the sights of that fair country that, in a fit of enthusiasm, he spent four or five millions on having the landscapes which he had brought back in his portfolio copied in the park. The most entrancing variety of foliage, the rarest trees, long valleys, picturesque vistas, lovely islands, like those on Lake Maggiore, floating upon clear, dancing waters, represent so many rays of light bearing the treasures of sight to a unique centre, to an *isola bella*, whence the enchanted eye takes in every detail at will ; an isle, in the heart of which is a small house hidden beneath the spreading branches of some ancient willows ; an isle edged with gladiolæ, rose-trees, flowers of every description, like an emerald set in gems. A place to fly to if a thousand miles away ! The most sickly, the most weary, the most jaded man of genius, taken from among a number of men of genius all in indifferent health, could go there and die of a surfeit of satisfaction, weighed down by the succulent delights of a life of vegetating. The owner of this veritable paradise seemed hardly to notice it, and, as he had neither wife nor children, was enamoured of a large monkey. The animal had, perhaps, had enough of the human race, for, earlier in its life, it was said, it had been loved by an Empress. The spiteful creature's dwelling-place was an elegant wooden kennel, that stood upon a stone column. It was kept on the chain and seldom fondled by its strange master, who was more often in Paris than at his country-seat ; for it enjoyed a very bad reputation. I remember having seen it, when I was with some ladies, behave as insolently as any man. Its bad habits increased at last to such an extent that the owner was obliged to have it killed. One morning, as I was seated beneath a beautiful flowering tulip-tree, in quiet idleness, luxuriously breathing the amorous perfumes that were shut into the lonely enclosure by some lofty poplars, enjoying the silence of the woods,

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listening to the murmur of the water and the rustle of the leaves, admiring, as I gazed above me, the blue patches that formed outlines to clouds of ivory and gold, allowing my imagination to wander into my future life, I heard some blockhead, who had come from Paris the night before, playing, with the sudden frenzy of an idler, upon a violin. I would not wish my bitterest enemy to experience a shock more out of tune with the sublime harmonies of nature. If distant notes as from Roland's horn had stirred the air, it may be that . . . but for a screeching stringed instrument to presume to convey human ideas, human phrases ! This Amphion, who had been walking up and down the dining-room, at last seated himself on a window-sill, exactly opposite the monkey. It may be that he wanted an audience. Suddenly I saw the animal come gently down from his little cage, plant itself on its two feet, bend down its head like a swimmer, and fold its arms across its chest just as a Spartan might have done when put in chains, or Catiline when listening to Cicero. The banker, called away by a silvery voice that awoke the echoes of a boudoir that I knew, placed the violin on the window-sill, and flew like a swallow that in swift horizontal flight rejoins its mate. The monkey's chain was a long one ; he reached the window, and gravely took up the violin. I do not know if you have ever experienced the pleasure of seeing a monkey learn music, but at this moment, when I no longer laugh as I used to laugh in those careless days, I never think of that monkey without smiling. The man-like beast began by grasping the instrument tightly in his two hands, and smelling it as if it were an apple he was about to taste. The breath from his nostrils probably produced a dull murmur on the resonant wood ; the ape raised his head, turned the violin over, turned it back again, raised it, lowered it, held it out straight, shook it, lifted it to his ear, dropped it, and picked it up again, with a rapidity of movement of which such

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animals alone are capable. He inspected the dumb piece of wood with a patient sagacity, which had something wonderful, and at the same time something incomplete, about it. At last he tried, in a most grotesque manner, to put the violin under his chin, and hold the neck in one hand ; but, like a spoilt child, he wearied of a task that required a knack which seemed to him to take too long to acquire, and he touched the strings with no better result than the production of discords. Then he grew angry, and put the violin down on the window-sill ; then, seizing hold of the bow, he began to pull it violently backwards and forwards, like a mason sawing a stone. This new attempt only succeeded in offending still further his critical ear, so that he took the bow in both hands and struck the innocent instrument blow after blow ; and this seemed to be a source of pleasure and productive of hitherto unknown harmony.

The sight reminded me of a schoolboy holding down his mate and feeding him with a quick succession of punches, to punish him for some meanness. Having tried the violin, and found it unsatisfying, the monkey sat down on the broken pieces, and with a kind of stupid satisfaction amused himself by wrapping his yellow hair round the broken bow.

Never from that day have I been able to observe the dwelling-places of the fore-ordained without comparing the majority of husbands to this orang-outang trying to play the violin.

Love is made up of the most melodious of harmonies and there is in us an innate aptitude for love. Woman is a charming instrument of pleasure, but we must understand the quivering strings, we must study the setting, the modest key-board, the ever-changing and capricious fingering. How many orang—I should say, men—marry without the least knowledge of what a woman is ? How many of the fore-ordained have not dealt with them as Cassan's monkey dealt with the violin ?

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They have broken the heart they have not understood, just as they have sullied and despised the jewel of whose secret they were ignorant. Children all their days, they depart from life empty-handed, only having vegetated, speaking of love and pleasure, of vice and virtue, only as slaves speak of freedom.

Nearly all have married in most profound ignorance of woman and of love. They have begun by breaking open the door of a strange house, fully expecting to be well received in the drawing-room. Why! the most trivial artist knows that there exists a certain indefinable friendship between himself and his instrument—his instrument of wood or of ivory. He knows that it takes years to create this mysterious affinity between himself and an inert body. Its resources and caprices, its faults and its virtues, are not discovered in a moment. He endows his instrument with a soul, and he draws melody from it only after long study. It is only after the most searching questions have been put that they come to know each other as friends. Can a man learn to know a woman, and succeed in deciphering this most wonderful of 'solfeggios' by living his life for ever sitting down, like some priest in a cell? Can a man who makes it his business to think for others, to judge others, to rule others, to steal other people's money, to feed, to heal, to wound others, can all our fore-ordained, in short, find time to learn to know a woman? Seeing that they sell their time, how should they give it to happiness? Money is their god, and no man can serve two masters. And for these reasons the world is full of young women who are pale and weak, ill and suffering. Some at the mercy of more or less serious inflammations, others the wretched victims of more or less violent nervous disorders. All such women's husbands are fore-ordained ignoramuses. It is the husbands who are the cause of their unhappiness, and they take as much trouble over it as an artist gives to some lovely flowers of pleasure, that are late in

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blossoming. The length of time which a fool spends in working out his ruin is that which a wise man takes to gain his happiness.

XXVI. Never begin marriage by rape.

In the preceding meditations we have indicated the extent of the evil with the audacity of a surgeon who, in order to conceal a shameful wound, encourages the growth of false tissue over it. Public virtue, laid out on the table of our operating theatre, has not left even a corpse for us to cut at. Lover or husband, have you smiled or shuddered at the evil?

Very well—it is with malicious joy that we put this huge social burden on the conscience of the fore-ordained. Harlequin trying to see if his horse can get used to going without food is not more ridiculous than the man who wishes to find happiness at home and yet neglects to cultivate it with all the care it craves. The sins of women are so many accusations against the egoism, the carelessness and the incapacity of their husbands.

Now it is your turn, reader, you who have often condemned your own particular crime in another—it is your turn to hold the balance. One of the pans is full enough; take care what you put into the other! Ascertain the number of the fore-ordained contained in the sum total of married people and weigh; you will find where the evil lies.

Let us penetrate still further into the causes of this conjugal malady.

The word ‘love,’ applied to the reproduction of the species, is the most odious blasphemy to which modern manners have given utterance.

In raising us by the divine gift of thought higher than the beasts, nature has made us capable of feeling and affection, of desire and passion. There exists in man the double nature of animal and lover. The

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distinction will throw light on the social problem on which we are engaged.

Marriage can be considered politically, civilly, or morally, as a law, a contract, or an institution; as a law, it is the reproduction of the species; as a contract, the transmission of property; as an institution, it is a guarantee in the bonds of which all men are interested; they have a mother and a father, they will have children.

Thus marriage ought to be an object of general respect. Society has only considered it under these three heads—they dominate the marriage question.

Most men who get married have only in view reproduction, propriety, or what is due to the child; yet neither reproduction, propriety, nor the child constitute happiness. ‘*Crescite et multiplicamini*’ does not imply love. To ask a girl whom one has seen fourteen times in a fortnight for her love on behalf of the law, the king and justice, is an absurdity only worthy of the fore-ordained!

Love is the union of desire and tenderness, and happiness in marriage comes from a perfect understanding between two souls. And from this it follows that to be happy a man is obliged to bind himself by certain rules of honour and delicacy. After having enjoyed the privilege of the social laws which consecrate desire, he should obey the secret laws of nature which bring to birth the affections. If his happiness depends on being loved, he himself must love sincerely; nothing can withstand true passion.

But to be passionate is always to desire.

Can one always desire one’s wife?

Yes.

It is as absurd to pretend that it is impossible always to love the same woman as to say that a famous artist needs several violins to play a piece of music and create an enchanting melody.

Love is the poetry of the senses. It holds in its

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hand the destiny of all that is great in man and of all that appertains to his mind. Either it is sublime, or it does not exist at all. When it does exist, it exists for ever, and grows greater every day. Love such as this was called the son of heaven and earth by the ancients.

Literature depends on seven situations ; music expresses everything with seven notes ; painting knows only seven colours ; like these three arts, love is perhaps formed of seven principles ; we will leave this investigation to the next century.

If poetry, music, and painting have an infinity of modes of expression, the pleasures of love ought to offer many more ; for in these three arts, which help us, it may be fruitlessly, to discover the truth by analogy, man is alone with his imagination, whilst love is the union of two beings and two souls. If the three chief methods which serve to express thought require preliminary study on the part of those whom nature has destined to be poets, musicians, or painters, would it not appear that a man must become initiated in the secrets of pleasure in order to be happy ? All men feel the need of reproduction, just as all feel hunger or thirst ; but all are not called upon to be lovers or epicures. Our very civilisation has proved that taste is a science, and that it only belongs to privileged beings to know how to eat and drink. Pleasure, considered as an art, awaits its physiologist. It is enough for us to have shown that it is ignorance, and nothing but ignorance, of the chief constituents of happiness that produces the misfortune which attends the fore-ordained.

With great misgiving do we venture to publish a few aphorisms which may assist in the furtherance of this new art, just as the existence of various kinds of soil has given rise to geology. We commend them to the meditations of the philosopher, the man about to marry, and the fore-ordained.

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MATRIMONIAL CATECHISM.

XXVII. Marriage is a science.

XXVIII. A man cannot marry before he has studied anatomy and has dissected at the least one woman.

XXIX. The fate of the house hangs on the first night.

XXX. The woman who is deprived of her free-will can never have the satisfaction of making a sacrifice.

XXXI. In love, leaving the soul out of consideration, woman is a lyre which only yields up its secrets to the man who can play upon it skilfully.

XXXII. Independent of feelings of repulsion, there is in every woman's soul a feeling which tends sooner or later to reject all pleasures that are devoid of passion.

XXXIII. The husband's interest, quite as much as his honour, prescribes that he shall never allow himself a pleasure for which he has not had the wit to awake a longing in his wife.

XXXIV. Pleasure is caused by the union of excitement and affection, hence one can hardly pretend that pleasures are solely material.

XXXV. Just as ideas go on increasing indefinitely, so it ought to be with pleasures.

XXXVI. A man never has two exactly similar moments of pleasure, any more than a tree has any two leaves exactly alike.

XXXVII. If there are differences between one moment of his pleasure and another, a man can always be happy with the same woman.

XXXVIII. The genius of the husband lies in deftly handling the various shades of pleasure, in developing them, and endowing them with a new style, an original expression.

XXXIX. Between two people who do not love one another, this genius is wanton ; but the caresses over which love presides are never lascivious.

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XL. The most chaste married woman can also be the most voluptuous.

XLI. The most virtuous woman can be indecent without knowing it.

XLII. When two mortals are joined together by pleasure, all social conventions sleep. This situation conceals a rock on which many ships have struck. A husband is lost if he but once forget that there is a modesty which is independent of veils. Married love should take off and put on the eye-bandage only at the proper time.

XLIII. Power does not lie in striking hard or often, but in striking true.

XLIV. To bring to birth a desire, to feed, develop, foster, excite, and satisfy it—is one long poem.

XLV. Pleasures go from distich to quatrain, from quatrain to sonnet, from sonnet to ballad, from ballad to ode, from ode to cantata, from cantata to dithyramb. The husband who begins with the dithyramb is a fool.

XLVI. Every night should have its own menu.

XLVII. Marriage should war unceasingly against a monster that is the ruin of everything : the monster custom.

XLVIII. If a man cannot distinguish the difference between the pleasures of two consecutive nights, he has married too early in life.

XLIX. It is easier to be a lover than a husband, for the simple reason that it is more difficult to have a ready wit the whole day long than to say a good thing occasionally.

L. A husband should never be the first to go to sleep nor the last to wake.

LI. The man who enters his wife's dressing-room is either a philosopher or a fool.

LII. The husband who leaves nothing to be craved for is lost.

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LIII. A married woman is a slave who must be enthroned.

LIV. A man cannot flatter himself that he knows his wife and can make her happy, unless he take her often on his knees.

It was to the whole tribe of ignorant fore-ordained, to the legions of coughers, smokers, takers of snuff, old fogies, grumblers, and so on, that Sterne in *Tristram Shandy* addressed the letter written by Walter Shandy to his brother Toby, when the latter was proposing to marry the Widow Wadman.

The celebrated instructions which this most original of English writers has given in the letter may, with some few exceptions, complete our remarks on the manner of conducting oneself in the presence of women, and we quote the whole as food for thought for the fore-ordained, while begging them to meditate upon it as one of the most famous masterpieces of the human mind.

MY DEAR BROTHER TOBY,

What I am going to say to thee is upon the nature of women, and of love-making to them ; and perhaps it is as well for thee,—tho' not so well for me,—that thou hast occasion for a letter of instructions upon that head, and that I am able to write it to thee.

Had it been the good pleasure of Him who disposes of our lots, and thou no sufferer by the knowledge, I had been well content that thou should'st have dipp'd the pen this moment into the ink, instead of myself ; but that not being the case,—Mrs. Shandy being now close beside me, preparing for bed,—I have thrown together, without order, and just as they have come into my mind, such hints and documents as I deem may be of use to thee, intending in this to give thee a token of my love ; not doubting, my dear Toby, of the manner in which it will be accepted.

In the first place, with regard to all which concerns

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religion in the affair,—though I perceive, from a glow in my cheek, that I blush as I begin to speak to thee upon the subject, as well knowing, notwithstanding thy unaffected secrecy, how few of its offices thou neglectest—yet I would remind thee of one (during the continuance of thy courtship) in a particular manner, which I would not have omitted ; and that is, never to go forth upon the enterprise, whether it be in the morning or afternoon, without first recommending thyself to the protection of Almighty God, that He may defend thee from the evil one.

Shave the whole top of thy crown clean once at least every four or five days, but oftener if convenient ; lest, in taking off thy wig before her, thro' absence of mind, she should be able to discover how much has been cut away by Time :—how much by Trim. 'Twere better to keep ideas of baldness out of her fancy.

Always carry it in thy mind, and act upon it as a sure maxim, Toby,—

' That women are timid ; ' and 'tis well they are,—else there would be no dealing with them.

Let not thy breeches be too tight, nor hang too loose about thy thighs, like the trunk-hose of our ancestors :

A just medium prevents all conclusions.

Whatever thou hast to say, be it more or less, forget not to utter in a low, soft tone of voice ;—silence, and whatever approaches it, weaves dreams of midnight secrecy into the brain : for this cause, if thou canst help it, never throw down the tongs and poker.

Avoid all kinds of pleasantry and facetiousness in thy discourse with her, and do whatever lies in thy power, at the same time, to keep from her all books and writings which tend thereto ; there are some devotional tracts, which if thou canst entice her to read over,—it will be well ;—but suffer her not to look into Rabelais, or Scarron, or Don Quixote.

They are all books which excite laughter ; and thou

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knowest, dear Toby, that there is no passion so serious as lust.

Stick a pin in the bosom of thy shirt, before thou enterest her parlour.

And if thou art permitted to sit upon the same sofa with her, and she gives thee occasion to lay thy hand on hers—beware of taking it ;—thou canst not lay thy hand on hers but she will find the temper of thine.—Leave that, and as many other things as thou canst, quite undetermined ; by so doing, thou wilt have her curiosity on thy side ; and if she is not conquered by that, and thy *ass* continues still kicking, which there is great reason to suppose,—thou must begin with first losing a few ounces of blood below the ears, according to the practice of the ancient Scythians, who cured the most intemperate fits of the appetite by that means.

Avicenna, after this, is for having the part anointed with the syrup of hellebore, using proper evacuations and purges ;—and I believe rightly.—But thou must eat little or no goat's flesh, nor red deer ;—nor even foal's flesh, by any means ;—carefully abstain,—that is, as much as thou canst,—from peacocks, cranes, coots, didappers, and water-hens.

As for thy drink, I need not tell thee, it must be the infusion of Vervain and the herb Hanea, of which Cælian relates such effects ; but if thy stomach falls with it,—discontinue it from time to time,—taking cucumbers, melons, purslaine, water-lilies, woodbine, and lettuce in the stead of them.

There is nothing further for thee which occurs to me at present,—unless the breaking out of a fresh war——

So, wishing everything, dear Toby, for the best,
I rest thy affectionate brother,

WALTER SHANDY.

In the actual circumstances, Sterne would probably have cut out the passage concerning the ass, and so far from advising a fore-ordained to withdraw himself from

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the race of men, he would have changed the diet of cucumbers and lettuce to a thoroughly substantial one. He advocated thrift so that in time of war there might be a magical prodigality therein, thereby imitating the admirable English Government, which in time of peace has two hundred ships, while in time of need, and when it is a matter of encompassing the sea and laying hold of a whole navy, the timber-yards can furnish double the number.

When a man belongs to the few whom a liberal education has initiated into the domain of thought, he should before marrying always consult his physical and moral powers. In order to be able to fight successfully against the storms which are raised in a woman's heart by a multitude of seductions, a husband should have—besides a knowledge of how to make himself agreeable, and a fortune which saves him from being included in any of the classes of the fore-ordained—robust health, fine tact, plenty of ready wit, good sense enough to allow his superiority to be felt only at opportune moments, and, lastly, exceptionally good sight and hearing.

If he keep in arrears with all his promises, although he possess a fine face, a good figure, a manly appearance, he is to be ranked with the fore-ordained. An ugly husband, too, so long as he had an expressive face, would be more likely to rout his evil genius, if his wife could once be led to forget his ugliness.

He must try hard and earnestly—and this is a point that Sterne has forgotten in his letter—never to smell of anything, and so avoid giving a handle to disgust. Whilst the use of scent only renders the handsome liable to harmful suspicions, an ugly man may safely make use of it in moderation.

He should carefully study his conduct, and be as careful over his conversation as if he were in love with the most fickle of women. It is for his edification that a philosopher has said :—

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‘A woman has been known to disgrace and ruin herself and make herself wretched for the rest of her life, on account of a man whom she has ceased to love, because he took off his coat clumsily, cut one of his nails badly, put on a sock on the wrong side, or went the wrong way to work to undo a button.’

One of his most important cares must be to hide from his wife the true state of his fortune, so that he may satisfy, like a generous-minded bachelor, any capricious fancies she may have.

Finally, he must exercise the most absolute dominion over the ass Sterne speaks of—a difficult matter indeed, requiring almost super-human courage. This ass should be as submissive to his master as a thirteenth-century slave; he should obey and be silent, go on or stand still, at the least word of command.

Even though he be armed with all these advantages, a husband can hardly enter the lists with very sanguine hopes of success. Like all the other husbands, he runs the risk of being in his wife’s eyes but a kind of responsible editor.—‘Why,’ cry those good young people whose horizons end with their noses, ‘why must love give us so much trouble? and why is it necessary, in order to live a happy married life, to go to school first? Perhaps the government will found us a chair of love, like the lately established chair of public law.’

Here is our reply:—

These rules, the number of which it is so difficult to reduce, these minute observations, these conceptions that vary just as much as temperament varies, are innate, so to speak, in hearts born for love, just as a feeling for what is in good style and a certain facility for contriving images is innate in the soul of the poet, the painter, and the musician. The men who would grow weary in attempting to put into practice the directions given in this meditation are as certainly ‘fore-ordained’ as he who cannot see the affinity between two different ideas is a fool. As a matter of fact, love

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has its great men just as war has its Napoleon, poetry its André Chénier, and philosophy its Descartes.

This remark contains the germ of a reply to the question which all mankind has been making for so many years: 'Why is a happy marriage so rare?'

This phenomenon of a virtuous people is rarely seen for the simple reason that one meets with so few men of genius. A true and lasting passion is a sublime drama played by two actors of equal talent, a drama in which the feelings are the catastrophes, desires the events, and where the least and lightest thought changes the scene. Now is it likely that among that tribe of bimana called a nation—when men of talent are already so rare in the other sciences, where, for success, the artist only needs a perfect understanding with himself—is it likely that a man and a woman possessing the genius of love to the same degree are often to be found?

Up to the present, we have contented ourselves with presenting the more or less real difficulties which a husband and wife have to overcome if they would be happy together; but what would happen if we were to unfold the awful picture of the moral obligations arising from a difference in character? We must cease; the man clever enough to guide and direct matters of temperament would indeed be a master of the world of the soul.

We will imagine that our model husband fulfils the first conditions necessary for success, in contending for his wife with her assailants. We will admit that he has no place in any of the many classes of the fore-ordained which we have passed in review. Let us acknowledge, in short, that his mind is imbued with all our maxims; that he is well versed in all the precepts of that wonderful science, a few of which we have laid down; that he has married full of wisdom; that he knows his wife and is loved by her; and let us go on to enumerate for the edification of the human race the general causes which may aggravate the critical situation at which he has arrived.

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SIXTH MEDITATION.

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IF you have married a young lady who has been educated at a boarding-school, your happiness is at the mercy of at least thirty mischances—over and above those we have just been enumerating, and your position is exactly that of a man who has put his hand on a wasp's nest.

Therefore, immediately after the marriage blessing, without being misled by your wife's innocent ignorance, her artless grace, or her bashful countenance, you should ponder and endeavour to act up to the axioms and precepts which we shall comment upon in the second part of the book. You should even put into practice the rigorous counsels of the third part, by immediately exercising an active supervision, and by displaying an almost paternal solicitude at all hours of the day; for, on the very day after your marriage, maybe on the day before, there is need for prompt action.

Remember the profound wisdom which novices gain *de natura rerum*—concerning the nature of things. Did Lapeyrouse, Cook or Captain Parry ever sail towards the Poles so eagerly as these fair students for the forbidden latitudes in the ocean of pleasure?

Since girls are more artful, more ingenious, and more inquisitive than boys, they arrange clandestine meetings, and carry on conversations (which no matron, however skilful, can prevent) with an acuteness a thousand times more infernal than that of college students.

Who has ever actually heard the moral reflections and shrewd judgments of these young girls? They alone know the games in which honour is cast aside at the outset, the experiments in pleasure, the voyages of discovery after voluptuousness, the sham happiness which may be compared to raids made by greedy

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children upon dessert which has been locked away. A girl may leave her school a virgin, yet not chaste. She may more than once have discussed in secret the absorbing question of lovers, and corruption may have begun to eat into her heart and mind—although it may not as yet have gone very far.

But let us admit that your wife has not shared these maiden's dainties, these precocious devilries. Will she be the better for not having joined in the deliberations of the secret counsels of the senior scholars? No, for in that case she would have contracted friendships with other young women, and we should be reckoning very modestly if we give her only two or three intimate friends. If your wife has come from a boarding-school, are you certain that her friends have not been admitted to secret meetings at which they have tried to learn in advance, at any rate by analogy, the 'frolics of turtle-doves'? In due course these friends marry, and then—when you have learnt how certain it is that some day you will have to take into consideration the people whom, without knowing it, you have married along with your wife—you will be at the mercy of four husbands and a round dozen of bachelors, of whose lives, principles, and habits, you are entirely ignorant. Satan alone has been able to picture a girl's school in the midst of a large town. At any rate, Madame Campan founded her famous establishment at Ecouen. This wise precaution proved that she was no ordinary woman. At Ecouen her young ladies would have no sight of the museum of the streets, filled with the huge, grotesque images and obscene words chalked up on the walls by young ragamuffins. There they would not have for ever before their eyes the picture of human weakness that is displayed at every post or pillar in France, and vicious emporiums would not pour forth in secret the poison of their eye-opening incendiary literature. At hardly any other place than Ecouen could this wise Principal have kept a maiden pure and spotless, if,

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indeed, such a thing is ever possible. But perhaps you hope to be able quite easily to prevent your wife from seeing her school friends? A folly-stricken notion! She will meet them at balls, at the theatre, on her walks, in society; and what service cannot two women render one another! . . . But we will consider this new source of danger in its proper place.

Nor is this all; if your mother-in-law sent her daughter to boarding-school, do you think it was out of regard for her? A girl between the age of twelve and fifteen is a terrible spy, and if the mother-in-law does not care for spies, I begin to suspect that madam belongs to the most suspicious class of honest women, and, on all occasions, she would be either a fatal example or a dangerous councillor to her daughter.

But stay! . . . the mother-in-law requires a meditation to herself.

Thus, wherever you turn, the marriage bed is full of thorns.

Before the Revolution, certain aristocratic families sent their daughters to the convent. Their example was followed by a number of people who imagined that to send their daughters where they would mix with the daughters of gentlemen would induce them to imitate their tone and manners. This error, arising as it did from snobbishness, was, in the first place, fatal to domestic happiness, and, moreover, the convent has all the inconveniences of the school.

The most terrible laziness prevails, and the cloisters kindle the imagination. Solitude is one of the devil's favourite dwelling-places; and one can hardly realise what havoc the most ordinary phenomena of life may make in the souls of these dreaming maidens, ignorant and unoccupied as they are.

Some of them, having as it were fondled idle fancies, give rise to more or less curious quid-pro-quo's. Others, having acquired exaggerated notions of the joys of married life, say to themselves, when they get a

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husband: 'What! is it only that!' From every point of view the incomplete knowledge which girls acquire when educated together has all the dangers of ignorance and all the misfortunes of learning.

A young girl brought up at home by a mother or an old aunt who is virtuous, narrow-minded, amiable, or morose; a young girl who has never put foot across the threshold without being surrounded with chaperones, who has been kept busy in her childhood with tasks, useless or otherwise; to whom, in short, everything—even a glimpse of a sick youth at St. Cyr—is unknown, is one of those treasures only met with here and there in the world, like the flowers in a wood that are surrounded with so many bushes that the eye cannot reach them. He who is the master of so sweet a flower, and allows others to cultivate it, deserves his misfortune a thousand times. Either he is a monster or he is a fool.

We have now come to the proper time for considering if there is any way whatsoever of marrying well and so putting off indefinitely those precautions which will be given in full in the second and third parts of this book; but has it not been well proved that it is easier to read *L'Ecole des femmes* in a tight-shut furnace than to understand the character, habits, and mind of a young woman who is about to marry?

Do not most men marry in exactly the same way as they buy a parcel of shares on the Stock Exchange?

And if in the preceding meditation we have succeeded in showing you that the majority of men remain, as regards marriage, most profoundly negligent of their honour, is it reasonable to suppose that one is likely to meet with many men rich enough, witty enough, observant enough, to give up one or two years of their lives in finding out and watching, like Burehell in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the girls they intend to marry—when they trouble themselves so little about them after that period of time, the influence of which we shall soon discuss, which the English call the honeymoon?

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Yet, after having pondered for a long time over this important matter, we are bound to say that there do exist some rules of choice which are more or less effectual, even when the choice is made quickly.

For example, it is certain that things will be in your favour :—

(i) If you marry a girl whose temperament resembles the temperament of the women of Louisiana and Carolina.

To gain reliable information concerning a young woman's temperament, you must make use of the maid-servants, and put into practice that system of which Gil Blas speaks, a system such as is employed by a statesman for the purpose of finding out a conspiracy or of learning how his ministers have passed the night.

(ii) If you choose a girl who, without being positively ugly, is on the other hand not rightly to be classed among pretty women. We regard it as a rule without exception, that sweetness of character in a woman joined to unbearable ugliness are two indispensable attributes of a married life that shall be the least unhappy.

But would you know the truth? Open your Rousseau, for there is no question concerning public morality of which he has not been the first to indicate the scope. You will read: 'In a moral nation, the girls are easy, the women strict. The contrary is true in a nation that is without morals.' According to the principle underlying this profoundly true remark, it would seem that there would not be so many unhappy marriages if men were to marry their mistresses. The education of girls in France would in that case have to be subjected to important modifications. French laws and manners, having to choose between a misdemeanour and the crime of procuring abortion, have up to now favoured the crime. As a matter of fact, a girl's sin is hardly a misdemeanour, if you compare it with that of a married

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woman. Is there not then infinitely less danger in granting liberty to girls than in allowing it to women? There is a greater number of serious men who shrink from the idea of taking a girl on trial than there are light-minded ones who laugh at her sprightliness. Custom in Germany, Switzerland, England, and the United States grants privileges to maidens which would seem in the eyes of France to be to the confusion of all morality; yet it is certain that marriages are, as a rule, less unhappy in these countries than in France.

‘When a woman gives herself up to her lover, she must be fully aware of what love has to offer her. The surrender of esteem and confidence necessarily precedes the surrender of the heart.’

Maybe these lines, which as it were glow with the light of truth, lit up the dungeon in which Mirabeau wrote them, and the fruitful observation which they contain, although the outcome of the most ardent of his passions, none the less dominates the social problem with which we are concerned. Indeed, a marriage cemented under the auspices of the close scrutiny which love demands, and under the dominion of the disenchantment which follows possession, should be the most insoluble of all unions.

A woman has then no justification for reproaching her husband on the score of the legal compact in virtue of which she belongs to him. She can no longer find in her forced submission a reason for surrendering herself to a lover, when later on she harbours in her heart an accomplice whose sophisms seduce her, as he asks her twenty times within an hour why she should not, having been given against her will to a man for whom she had no love whatever, now give herself of her own free will to the man whom she does love. A woman may no longer rail against those failings which are part of human nature, for she has beforehand essayed their tyranny and espoused their caprices.

Many a young girl is deceived in her expectations

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of love ; but would it not be an enormous benefit to her not to be the companion of a man whom she has a right to despise ?

Alarmists will exclaim that such a change in our regulations would give justification for the most fearful public lewdness ; that laws, or the public opinion that controls them, cannot after all sanction scandal and immorality ; that if these evils must exist, society ought at least not to hold them in reverence.

It is easy to reply first of all that the proposed system would tend to prevent these evils, which have up to now been looked upon as inevitable ; however inaccurate our statistics may be, they have always shown that there does exist a great social sore, and our moralists seem to prefer the greater evil to the less, the violation of the principle on which society is based, and the granting of equivocal liberty to their daughters ; they prefer dissoluteness on the part of mothers, who corrupt the very sources of the education of the nation and bring down woe upon at least four people, to dissoluteness on the part of a young girl who only compromises herself and, at the most, a child. Rather let the virtue of ten virgins perish than this holiness in our morals, this crown of honour in which every mother should array herself ! In the picture of a young girl abandoned by her seducer there may be something imposing and even awe-inspiring ; in it we may see broken pledges, holy trust betrayed, and beneath the ruins of the lightest virtues, Innocence in tears losing confidence in everything as she loses confidence in the love of the father of her child. But the unfortunate woman is still innocent ; it is still possible for her to become a faithful wife, a tender mother ; and if the past has been clouded, the future may perchance be as clear as the blue sky of heaven. Shall we find such lovely colours in the gloomy pictures of illegitimate amours ? In one, the woman is a victim, in the other she is a criminal. What hope is left to the adulteress ? If God

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forgive her her sin, the most exemplary life here below will not blot out its living fruit. If James I. was Rizzio's son, Mary Stuart's crime has lasted as long as the unfortunate royal house, and the fall of the Stuarts is the work of justice.

But, seriously, would the emancipation of young women, after all, entail so very many dangers? It is very easy to accuse a young girl of letting herself be led away because of a desire to escape at any price the state of girlhood; but this is only true in the actual condition of our morals. A young woman of to-day has no knowledge either of seduction or its snares; she shelters herself beneath her weakness alone; her delusive imagination, revelling as it does in the convenient sophisms of high life, and being governed by desires which everything tends to foster, is so blind a guide that a young girl seldom confides to another the secret thoughts of her first love. . . .

If she were enfranchised, her education, having been free from all prejudice, would arm her against the love of the first-comer. Like every one else, she would be much more able to withstand known, than unknown, dangers. Moreover, if she were mistress of herself, would a girl be less under the vigilant eye of her mother? And again, do the modesty and timidity which have been so strongly implanted in a young girl's soul by nature for the sake of saving her from the misfortune of belonging to a man who does not love her, count for nothing? In short, where is the girl who is so little observant as not to have realised that the most immoral of men would have his wife a woman of principle, just as mistresses would have perfect servants; and that therefore virtue is the safest and most fruitful investment for her.

After all, what exactly is the point at issue? On whose behalf are we bargaining for freedom? At most on behalf of five or six hundred thousand maidens, all armed with 'pet aversions,' from which they know quite well how to defend themselves, and making no

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secret of the high price for which, and for no less, they are willing to sell themselves. Practically all of the eighteen million whom we have left out of consideration marry in the way we advocate; and as for the intermediate classes, by which our poor *bimana* are separated from the privileged men who march at the head of the nation, why, the number of foundlings which these easy-going classes hand down to misery has increased since the peace—that is if we are to believe M. Benoiston de Châteauneuf, one of the bravest of savants, who has given himself up to a dry but useful research in statistics. Now, to how deep a wound do we not bring remedy, if we think of the bastards—numberless, according to the statistics,—and of the unfortunate women in high society on whom our calculations breathe suspicion! But it is difficult in this place to set forth all the advantages which would result from the emancipation of girls. When we come to observe the circumstances which accompany marriage as our society has conceived it, thoughtful minds will be able to appreciate the value of this system of education, and the freedom, which in the name of reason and of Nature herself, we ask for our girls. The prejudice which exists in France in favour of the virginity of women when they marry, is the most foolish of any that still remain. Orientals take their wives without troubling themselves about their past, and shut them up so as to make quite sure of their future; the French place their girls into a kind of harem protected by the mothers, by prejudice and by religion; and they grant absolute freedom to their wives, in this way displaying far more anxiety about the past than the future. There seems, then, to be nothing for it but completely to reorganize our morals. In the end we might succeed in giving to faithfulness in marriage all the flavour and the relish which the women of to-day seem to find in unfaithfulness.

But we should be carried too far from our subject if we tried to examine in all its details the immense

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moral benefit that would accrue to France in the twentieth century ; for manners are reformed so slowly ! Is it not necessary for the working of the smallest of changes that the most deep-rooted notions of the past century become the most trifling ones of the present ? It is, perhaps, rather impertinent of us to have mooted the question at all—whether we did so to show that it had not escaped us, or to bequeath one task the more to future generations. But, seriously, here is a third problem : the first was concerned with courtesans, and the second with the physiology of pleasure :

‘ When we get ten, we’ll make a cross.’

In the present condition of our morals and our imperfect civilisation, a problem arises which for the moment is insoluble, and which makes every dissertation superfluous when compared with the art of choosing a wife ; we bequeath it, with the other problems, to the meditations of philosophers.

PROBLEM.

It has not yet been decided whether a woman is goaded into being unfaithful by the impossibility of setting herself free, or by the freedom which is allowed her.

Moreover, if a man has met with a woman of a sanguine temperament, a lively imagination, a nervous constitution, or an indolent disposition, the more serious will his position be at the moment of his marriage. A man would be in still greater danger if his wife drank only water (see the meditation on the hygiene of marriage) ; but, if she has a talent for singing, or if she takes cold easily, he should tremble every day of his life ; for it is an established fact that singers are, to say the least of it, as impassioned as the woman whose mucous membrane is very delicate.

Finally, the peril becomes greater still if the wife is less than seventeen ; or, again, if she is of a pale and

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sallow complexion, — this kind of woman is almost always artful.

But we have no wish to forestall the terrors which every symptom of evil that a husband may notice in his wife's character produce in him.

This digression has already led us far away from boarding-schools, where so many unfortunate women are secreted, and whence come young girls who are incapable of appreciating the painful sacrifices by which the honest men who honour them with marriage have attained their wealth ; young girls impatient for the delights of a luxurious life, ignorant of our laws, ignorant of our customs, eagerly grasping the power which their beauty gives them, and ready to abandon the true notes of the soul for the buzzing tones of flattery.

Only let this meditation leave in the minds of all who read it, even of those who have only opened the book to keep themselves in countenance or to while away the time, a deep aversion for young ladies educated at boarding-schools, and already will great service have been rendered to the public cause.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE HONEYMOON.

IF our earlier meditations have proved that it is almost impossible in France for a married woman to remain virtuous, then the enumeration of bachelors and of the fore-ordained, our remarks on the education of girls, and our short examination of the difficulties arising in the choice of a wife, will have explained up to a certain point our weakness as a nation. Having thus openly indicated the secret malady by which society is afflicted, we have sought its causes in the imperfect state of our laws, in the inconsistency of our morals, the incapacity of our minds, and the contradictions in our manners and

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customs. One thing yet remains concerning the invasion of the evil which calls for remark.

We come to the original source of the evil when we enter into the discussion of the important questions involved in the honeymoon ; and, in the same way as we find there the starting-point of all matrimonial phenomena, so it affords us the shining link of the chain to which our remarks, axioms, problems—all the wise follies of our gossiping meditations—would fasten themselves. The honeymoon will be as it were the zenith of the analysis to which, before setting our two champions by the ears, we must devote ourselves.

The expression 'honeymoon' is an anglicism ; and so aptly does it depict the nuptial season, during which, fleeting as it is, life is all sweetness and rapture, that it has become current in every language. Later it is found amid life's illusions and errors, for it is of all lies the most odious. If it presents itself as a nymph crowned with fresh flowers and bewitching as a siren, it is because it is evil personified ; and evil has a sportive habit of frisking as it comes to meet us.

The man and woman who are destined to love one another all their lives have no honeymoon ; for them it does not exist, or rather it exists always ; they are like the immortal, who do not understand what death is. But such happiness lies outside the scope of this work ; marriage, as far as our readers are concerned, is under the influence of two moons : the honeymoon and the April moon. The April moon comes to an end by a revolution that changes it into a crescent ; and when once it has shone into a home, it will shine on for ever.

How can the honeymoon shine upon two beings who have no right to love one another ?

How does it set when it has once risen ?

Do all married people have a honeymoon ?

We will proceed to take these three questions in order.

The splendid education which we give our daughters,

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and the prudent laws under which men marry, will here bear fruit. Let us examine the circumstances by which the less unhappy marriages are preceded and accompanied.

Our customs naturally develop an excessive curiosity in the young girl whom you make your wife ; but, as French mothers pride themselves on setting their daughters daily on the fire without allowing them to burn, this curiosity is now no longer directed towards a fixed goal.

A thorough ignorance of the mysteries of marriage deprives this young person, who is as simple as she is cunning, of any knowledge of its dangers ; and since marriage is for ever being held up to her as an epoch of tyranny and of liberty, of enjoyment and of sovereignty, her desires grow in intensity and are only satisfied with all the delights that life can possibly afford : to her mind, simply to be married is to get nothing out of life.

If she possess a feeling for happiness, religion, or morality, her mother and the laws will have told her over and over again that happiness can only come from you—the husband.

If she do not possess virtue, she feels the need of your authority—for she expects everything from you ; in former days the slavery of women was sanctioned, and, feeling herself to be weak, timid, and ignorant even now, she does not wish for freedom.

If we leave out of consideration the actual making of a mistake (which may be due to chance) or the contracting of an aversion for you which it is unpardonable in you not to foresee, she ought to try to please you ; she does not know you, remember.

Finally, to make your triumph all the easier, you take her at the moment when, as a rule, nature is soliciting most eagerly the pleasures which are yours to dispense. Like St. Peter, you hold the key of Heaven.

Now—I put it to every reasonable being—could a devil gather the elements of his evil-doing round an

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angel, whose ruin he has sworn to achieve, with more care than our morals display in planning a husband's misfortune? Is he not surrounded by as many flatterers as a king?

Handed over with all her ignorance and all her desires to a man who, though loving, cannot know, and indeed ought not to know, her inmost thoughts, charming as they are, will not this young girl be shamefully passive, submissive, and complaisant during the whole time in which her youthful imagination is persuading her to wait for the pleasure and happiness of a to-morrow that never comes?

In this odd state of affairs, where social laws and the laws of nature are at daggers drawn, a young girl is obedient, gives herself up, suffers and keeps silent for her own sake. Her obedience is a speculation; her complaisance, a hope; her devotion, a sort of vocation by which you profit; and her silence is a generous silence. She will be the victim of your whims as long as she does not understand them; she will endure your nature until she has had time to study it; she will sacrifice herself without loving, because she believes in the semblance of passion which the first days of possessing her give you; from the day on which she discovers the uselessness of her sacrifices, she will keep silent no longer.

Then will come a day when all the misconstructions that have presided over the union will rise up, like the branches of a tree weighed down for a time by a heavy mass which has been gradually lightened. You have taken for love the negative state of a young girl who was awaiting happiness, who anticipated your desires in the hope that you would anticipate hers, and who did not dare complain of the secret miseries of which in the first place she accused herself.

Who would not be the dupe of so well-planned a fraud, of which the young woman is the innocent accomplice and victim in one? To escape the fasci-

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nating wiles with which nature and society surround him, a man would need to be superhuman. Is not everything in him and of him a snare? For, to be happy, must he not defend himself against the burning desires of his senses? Where is that firm barrier which the frail hand of woman interposes to restrain them—a woman not yet possessed, whom one is bound to please? Have you, too, led out your troops and marched them past when there was no one at the window? Have you, too, let off your fireworks so that, when your guest arrives to see them, only the skeletons remain? Your wife feels towards the pleasures of marriage like a Mohican would feel at the Opera: the interpreter is annoyed when the savage begins to understand.

LVI. The moment during which husband and wife may understand one another is as short as a flash of lightning, and it never returns.

This first attempt at life together—when the woman is encouraged by the hope of happiness, by her newly formed ideas on the duties of a wife, by a desire to please, by that virtue which is so seductive when love is displayed in harmony with duty—is called the honeymoon. How can it last for any length of time between two beings who are joined together before they thoroughly know one another? If there is anything to be wondered at, it is that these deplorable absurdities with which the custom of our country surrounds the marriage bed bring about so little hatred! . . .

That the life of the good son is as a peaceful stream, and that of the prodigal as a torrent; that the child whose hands have imprudently plucked all the roses by the roadside finds only thorns on his way back; that the man who in his mad youth has consumed a million, can no longer in his lifetime enjoy the forty thousand a year which this million would have brought him—all these are trivial truisms, con-

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sidered in the light of morality, and they are new ideas, when looked at in the light of the conduct of most men. Such are the true images of every honeymoon ; such is their history ; not their cause but their effect.

But the fact that men endowed by a liberal education with considerable mental powers, accustomed to thinking out grand schemes for attaining fame in politics or in literature, in the arts, in business or in private life, all marry with the intention of being happy, of governing their wives by love or by force, and all fall into the same trap and become fools after having enjoyed a certain amount of happiness—this fact, I say, surely presents a problem the solution of which is only to be found in the unfathomed depths of the human soul, not in the physical truths by means of which we have already attempted to explain some of the phenomena. The dangerous investigation of the secret laws which almost all men in this situation unwittingly violate affords glory enough even to him who runs amuck in the enterprise, for us to venture upon it too. Let us at any rate make the attempt.

Notwithstanding all that fools have to say of the difficulty they experience in trying to explain love, there are connected with it rules as infallible as the rules of geometry ; but since every nature modifies them at will, we can only indicate love by pointing out the whims and fancies born of our various temperaments. If we were permitted to perceive only the varying effects of light without knowing the laws that govern it, many a mind would refuse to believe in the sun, and in the uniformity with which we travel round it. The blind may cry at their ease ; I boast, like Socrates (but without being as wise as he), of knowing only love ; and, in order to spare married people, or those who are about to marry, the trouble of racking their brains, I will try to deduce some of its precepts—they will understand them well enough.

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Now all our foregoing remarks come under a single proposition which may be looked upon as either the last or the first boundary of that secret theory of love, which would end by boring us if we did not speedily bring it to a conclusion. The principle is contained in the following formula :

LVII. The duration of the passion of two beings who are susceptible to love is in proportion to the original resistance on the part of the woman, or to the obstacles which society chances to put in the way of their happiness.

If you are left longing only for one day, your happiness may not last three nights. Where are we to seek grounds for this law ? I do not know. If we do but look round, we shall find plenty of proofs of the rule ; in the vegetable kingdom, the plants which are longest in growing are those which attain to longest life ; in the moral sphere, the tasks of yesterday are gone to-morrow ; in the animal kingdom, he who infringes the law of gestation begets dead fruit. A lasting work always lies for a long period hidden in the bosom of time. A long future demands a long past. If love is a child, passion is a man. The universal law that governs nature, human beings and their feelings, is as we have shown exactly the one that marriage infringes. It has given rise to the romances of the middle ages. The Amadis of the poets, the Launcelots, the Tristans, whose constancy in love would appear to be truly fabulous, are all allegorical of this national mythology which has been nipped in the bud by our imitation of Greek literature. The lovely figures painted by the imagination of our old poets of the North have hallowed this universal law.

LVIII. We do not attach ourselves lastingly to anything that has not cost us care, labour, or longing.

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All that our meditations have revealed to us as to the grounds on which this primordial law of love rests, is expressed in the following axiom, which is at once the principle itself and its consequence.

LIX. In all cases one receives but in proportion to what one gives.

This principle is so self-evident, that we will not attempt to explain it. We will add but one remark, which does not seem to us unimportant. The man who said, 'All is true and all is false,' proclaimed a fact that the human mind, naturally sceptical, interprets in its own way, for in truth it seems that human things have as many sides as there are minds to consider them. In support of this, read what follows :

There does not exist in all creation a single law that is not balanced by an opposite law ; life is kept in equilibrium by two contending forces. Thus, in the subject which is occupying us, that is, love, it is certain that if you give too much, you will not get enough in return. The mother who lavishes all her love on her children creates ingratitude, an ingratitude arising perhaps from the extreme difficulty her children experience in requiting her love. The woman who bestows more love than she receives will necessarily be tyrannised over. Lasting love is that which keeps the forces of the two beings in equilibrium. Now this state of equilibrium can always be set up ; the one who loves best must remain in the sphere of action of the forces of the one who loves least. And, after all, supposing that love agrees to inequality of this kind, is it not the greatest sacrifice a loving soul can make ?

What a feeling of wonder rises in the philosophic soul when it discovers that there is perhaps but one single law in the world, as there is but one God, and that our thoughts and affections obey the same laws

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that cause the sun to rise and set, the flowers to bloom, and the universe to flourish !

We ought, perhaps, to seek in this abstract love for the reasons for the following proposition, which throws so brilliant a light on the question of honeymoons and April moons.

THEOREM.

Man can start with aversion and end with love ; but, if he begin with love and come round to aversion, he will never get back to love. _____

In certain human beings the feelings are as incomplete as the mind is with people devoid of imagination. Thus while certain minds are endowed with the power of grasping the relations existing between certain things without drawing any conclusion from them; with a faculty for grasping each relation separately without uniting them, in spite of their power of seeing, comparing and expressing themselves; so too can souls conceive feelings in an imperfect manner. Talent, in love as in all the arts, consists in combining the power of imagination with that of execution. The world is full of people who sing airs which are not repeated, who have momentary ideas just as they have momentary feelings, who can no more order the workings of their affections than of their thoughts ; they are, in a word, incomplete beings. Join a fine intelligence to a poor one, and you sow the seeds of misery ; for equilibrium must in all cases be set up.

We leave to carpet-philosophers and back-parlour wiseacres the pleasure of seeking out the numerous ways in which temperaments, minds, social circumstances and even fortune itself may destroy equilibrium, and we will examine the final cause which affects the setting of the honeymoon and the rise of the April moon.

There is one principle in life which is more potent than life itself—a movement proceeding from some unknown force. Man is no more in the secret of this whirling motion than the earth is in its rotation. This

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something, which I should like to call the current of life, bears away our dearest thoughts, wears out our will, and drags us all along in spite of ourselves. Thus, a thoroughly sensible man who, being a merchant, has not failed to pay his bills, and having escaped death, or what is perhaps more cruel, an illness, by the observance of some simple daily practice, is yet in due course tightly nailed between four planks, though he has said to himself every night, 'I must not forget my lozenges to-morrow!' How can we explain this irresistible influence that governs everything in life? Is lack of energy the explanation? the strongest wills have succumbed to it; lack of memory? men having this faculty in the highest degree are subject to it.

This fact, evidences of which every one has been able to recognise in his neighbour, is one of the grounds on which husbands are deprived of the joys of the honeymoon. The wisest of men, who has escaped all the reefs which we have already pointed out, sometimes fails to avoid the snares which have thus been laid for him.

I have noticed that man treats marriage and its dangers in something like the manner in which he treats his wigs; and perhaps the following sentences, containing phases of thought referring to the wig, may be taken as formulæ for human life:—

First epoch.—Shall I ever have white hair?

Second epoch.—In any case, if I have white hair, I shall never wear a wig. Heavens, what an ugly thing a wig is!

One morning, you hear a young voice, whose chords have many a time vibrated to love, call out, 'Why, you have a white hair!'

Third epoch.—Why not wear a well-made wig, and take people in? There is a certain merit in deceiving the world; and, besides, a wig keeps you warm, prevents your taking cold, and so on.

Fourth epoch.—The wig is so well made that you deceive all who have not known you before. The wig

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engrosses you, and every morning you rival in your self-esteem the cleverest of hair-dressers !

Fifth epoch.—A neglected wig. Heavens, how tiresome it is to have to take it off one's head in the evening and frizz it up in the morning !

Sixth epoch.—A few white hairs begin to show through the wig ; it shifts, and an observer notices on the nape of your neck a white line, that contrasts strongly with the darker shades of the wig, which has been pushed up by your coat-collar.

Seventh epoch.—The wig looks like tow, and (if you will pardon the expression) you make a fool of yourself over your wig !

‘ Sir,’ asked a woman of powerful intellect, who has deigned to enlighten me on some few of the more obscure portions of my book, ‘ what do you mean by this tale of the wig ? ’

‘ Madam,’ I reply, ‘ when a man becomes indifferent about his wig, he is he is what your husband probably is not.’

‘ But my husband is not (she considered) he is not amiable ; he is not very well ; he is not good-tempered ; he is not ’

‘ Then, madam, he will be indifferent about his wig.’

She looked at me with an air of dignity which she easily feigned, I at her with an almost imperceptible smile.

‘ I see,’ said I, ‘ a man should carefully respect the ear of the weaker sex, for it is the only chaste thing about them.’

I assumed the attitude of a man with something of importance to reveal, and the good lady lowered her eyes, as though she feared she might have cause to blush at what I was going to say.

‘ Madam, a minister is not taken nowadays, as in former times, for a yes or a no ; a Chateaubriand does not any longer put Françoise de Foix to the torture ; no longer do we carry at our sides a long sword wherewith to

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revenge an insult. Now in a century in which civilisation has made such rapid progress, when the most intricate science is taught in twenty-four lessons, all of us should be consumed with an enthusiasm for perfection. We are not able any longer to speak the rude, coarse, vigorous language of our forefathers. The age of such fine rich fabrics, such elegant furniture, such delicate china, should be the age of periphrases and circumlocution. We must, therefore, try to invent a new word that shall take the place of the comical expression employed by Molière, since, as a contemporary has said, this great man's language is too outspoken for ladies who find gauze too thick a material for their clothes. Now, men of the world are no more ignorant than scholars are of the inborn feeling the Greeks had for mystery. That poetic nation well knew how to put a mythological touch to the ancient traditions of their history. All the Greeks were poets and romancers, and in their rhapsodies kings became gods, and gallant adventures, immortal allegories. According to M. Champré, Licentiate of Laws, author of the *Dictionary of Mythology*, the 'labyrinth' was 'a wooded enclosure, set off with buildings placed in such a manner that when once a young man had entered he could never find his way out. Here and there flowering shrubs were to be seen, but in the midst of a number of pathways which crossed in every direction and presented the same appearance wherever one looked ; in among rocks, brambles, and thorns, the patient seeker had to encounter an animal called a minotaur. Now, madam, if you will do me the honour of calling to mind the fact that the minotaur was, of all known creatures, the one that was signalled out by mythology as the most dangerous ; that, to secure themselves from its ravages, the Athenians had promised to sacrifice fifty virgins to it every year ; you will avoid falling into M. Champré's error—he imagined no more than an English garden—you will recognise a charming allegory

THE HONEYMOON

in this ingenious fable, or rather a faithful and terrible image of the dangers of marriage. The paintings recently discovered at Herculaneum have proved this. As a matter of fact, scholars had long thought that, as some authors described him, the minotaur was an animal half man, half bull; but the fifth group of ancient paintings at Herculaneum shows us this allegorical monster with his whole body that of a man and only a bull's head; any doubt is removed by the fact that he is lying at the feet of Theseus. Why, madam, do we not ask mythology to come to our aid? Hypocrisy is gaining ground, and already we no longer laugh as our fathers laughed. Thus, when a young woman has failed to hide her misconduct beneath the veil by which honest women hide their wrong-doing, our ancestors would have summed her up in one word; but you fine ladies in your reticence content yourselves with saying, "Oh, yes, she is very nice, but" But what? "But she is often rather indiscreet." I have long sought to understand the meaning of this word, madam; and, above all, have I sought the figure in rhetoric by which you make it express the opposite of what it means; I have thought about it in vain. Vert-Vert was the first to use the words our ancestors used, and he, unfortunately, used them in respect of innocent nuns, whose infidelities in no way struck at men's honour. When a woman is indiscreet, the husband is, according to me "minotaurised." If the victim is a polite gentleman, of whom the world thinks highly (and many husbands really deserve to be pitied), then, in speaking of him, you say, in soft, fluty tones, "M. A—— is a very estimable man, his wife is very pretty, but it is whispered that they are not happy together." Thus, madam, the estimable man who is not happy at home, the man who has an indiscreet wife, or the minotaurised husband, are all husbands after the manner of Molière. Now, I ask you, O goddess of modern taste, do these expressions seem to you to be, in their transparency, sufficiently chaste?

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‘ O heavens ! ’ said she, smiling, ‘ if the thing is there, what does it matter if it be expressed in two syllables or a hundred ! ’

She dropped me a mocking little curtsy and vanished, going doubtless to rejoin the Countesses of the preface and all other metaphorical creatures so often used by writers in bringing to light or re-arranging ancient manuscripts.

As for those of you, my readers, who belong to the more genuine minority, if among you there are any who would make common cause with my conjugal champion, I warn you that you will not find your home become unhappy all at once. A man reaches this ‘ temperature ’ by degrees, and in marriage without noticing it. Many men have lived in unhappy homes all their lives and not known it.

This domestic revolution always follows certain fixed rules ; for the revolutions of the honeymoon are as steadfast as the phases of the moon in the heavens, and the laws of its revolution are applicable to every household. Have we not shown that the moral nature has its laws as well as the physical nature ?

Your wife will never, as we have said elsewhere, accept a love without first seriously thinking over the step she intends to take. By the time of the waning of the honeymoon, you have enlarged rather than satisfied her feeling for pleasure ; you have opened the book of life for her, and she is wonderfully quick to conceive, through the prosiness of your half-hearted love, the poetry which should be the outcome of two souls in harmony with pleasure. Like a timid bird still suffering terror from the noise of some recent firing, she pokes her head out of the nest, looks round, and surveys the world ; and knowing the word in the charade which you have been playing, she feels instinctively the void which your languishing passion is leaving. She divines that only with a lover can she regain with all its enchantments the exercise of her free will in love.

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You have been, as it were, drying green wood for a future fire.

At this juncture, the woman does not exist, even among the most virtuous, who might not be found worthy of a strong passion ; at any rate all dream of it, and all believe they are very susceptible to love : for self-esteem is always ready at hand to reinforce a conquered enemy.

‘ If an honest woman’s career were only perilous, I am with you’ said an old woman ; ‘ but it is also boring, and I never yet met a virtuous woman who was not thinking of playing a double part.’

Therefore—even before a lover presents himself—a woman will discuss the propriety, so to speak, of her having one ; she will undergo a struggle which is set up within her by the obligations, the laws, the religion, and the secret desires of a nature which knows no yoke save that of its own imposing. A new order of things comes into existence ; the first warning that Nature, that kind and indulgent mother, gives to all who are about to run into danger. Nature has hung round the minotaur’s neck a little bell, like that which hung on the tail of the awful serpent, the terror of the traveller. Then appear in your wife what we may call the ‘ first symptoms,’ and woe to him who knows not how to combat them ! Those readers who can remember having seen any of them lately in their homes, may turn to the end of the book—there they will find consolation.

This situation, in which two people may remain for a long time, will, as it is the finishing-point of our general remarks, serve us as a new starting-point. An intelligent man ought to know how to interpret the mysterious signs, the almost imperceptible and involuntary disclosures which a woman makes at this time ; for the following meditation can at most only indicate to neophytes in the sublime science of marriage its important features.

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EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THE FIRST SYMPTOMS.

WHILE your wife is going through the crisis at which we left her, you yourself are enjoying delightful feelings of perfect safety. You have seen the sun so many times, that you are beginning to think that it shines on all alike ; and you do not bestow on the trivial doings of your wife that attention which should be the accompaniment to your love's first transports.

Many husbands in their indolence fail to notice in their wives the signs of a coming storm ; and this state of mind has ' minotaurised ' more husbands than favourable opportunities, cabs, sofas, and rooms in town ever have. This feeling of indifference towards danger is to a certain extent brought about, and even justified, by the apparent calm which surrounds you. The conspiracy that our million hungry bachelors are plotting against you creeps upon you slowly, but it is none the less sure. Although all fair damsels are at enmity one with the other, and not one of them knows the other, yet a kind of instinct has taught them the password.

When two people marry, the minotaur's myrmidons, young as well as old, generally have the politeness to leave them entirely to themselves at first. They look upon a husband as a workman who has to rough-hew, polish, cut, and mount the diamond which will one day be passed from hand to hand and universally admired.

The sight of a young couple who are very much attached to one another always delights those bachelors who enjoy the title of rake ; they are very careful not to destroy the work by which society is to profit ; they know, too, that heavy rain does not last long, so they keep out of the way ; but they are always on the watch, and they detect with incredible adroitness the moment

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when husband and wife begin to tire of their seventh heaven.

The tact that bachelors display in finding out the very moment at which a cold wind begins to whistle through the house can only be compared with the indifference in which husbands for whom the April moon is rising are steeped. Even in intrigue there is the ripe moment, for which the lover knows how to wait. The truly great man is he who considers all the possible chances. Men of fifty-two, whom we have pointed out as particularly dangerous, are well aware, for example, that the woman who haughtily refuses a man when he offers himself as a lover, will, three months later, receive him with open arms. And yet it is true that in general married people display the same artlessness in betraying their coolness as they do in announcing their love.

During the time when you are wandering with your lady through the enchanted fields of the seventh heaven, fields in which the time of lingering varies with your character, you go but little, or not at all, into society, as the previous meditation showed. Happy enough at home, if you do go out it is to have, after the manner of lovers, a little jaunt on the sly, to the theatre, into the country, and so on. From the moment when you again put in an appearance in society, either together or alone, when you are often to be seen at balls, parties, and all the vain amusements resorted to as a means of filling the empty void in the heart, bachelors imagine that your wife comes in search of distractions; or that her house or her husband are boring her.

The bachelor knows that by this time half the journey is done. You are on the eve of being 'minotaurised,' and your wife will soon be 'indiscreet': that is to say that, on the contrary, she will be very discreet as to her conduct, and she will think it over most carefully, while you will be unable to understand it.

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She will not, from this time on, outwardly fall short in any of her obligations, and, now that she has less virtue, she will seek after its true colours all the more earnestly.

‘Alas!’ said Crébillon, ‘should one inherit from a man one has murdered?’

Never will you have known her more careful to please you. She will try to compensate you for the secret wrong she is meditating against your happiness by little acts of endearment, which make you think her love will last for ever; whence the phrase ‘As happy as a fool.’ But it is the nature of women either to despise their husbands, for the very reason that they can so successfully deceive them, or to hate them, if through them their plans miscarry; or they come to regard them with an indifference which is a thousand times worse than hate.

When things have come to this pass, eccentricity on the part of the woman is the first symptom. A woman is glad to escape from herself and her thoughts, but she does not display that eagerness that is the mark of a thoroughly unhappy wife. She dresses carefully, in order (so she will tell you) to flatter your pride by attracting all eyes at parties and entertainments. When she returns to the bosom of her boring family, you see her from time to time look gloomy and pensive; then she will suddenly laugh and be very gay; as if trying to force herself to forget her troubles; then, again, she puts on a serious air, not unlike that of a German marching to battle. This changeability is a sign of the terrible hesitation and doubt that we have spoken of. There are some women who read novels with the idea of enlivening themselves with the image of crossed love triumphing in the long-run, an image which novelists present so skilfully in so many different ways; or to accustom themselves, at any rate mentally, to the dangers of an intrigue.

She will profess that she holds you in the highest

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esteem. She will tell you that she loves you as she would love a brother ; that a sensible affection of that kind is the only true one, the only one that lasts, and that the sole aim of marriage is to establish such an affection between man and wife.

She will be clever enough to realise that although in reality she has only obligations to fulfil, she can pretend to exercise rights and privileges.

She sees with a shudder that you alone can forecast all the details of married happiness. This happiness has perhaps never pleased her much, and, moreover, it is always there when she wants it ; she knows it thoroughly, she has analysed it carefully ; and how many are the evidences, terrible even if they are insignificant, that at this time prove to a husband, if he is sensible, that the frail creature is arguing and reasoning within herself, instead of being carried away by passion ! . . .

LX. The more one criticises, the less one loves.

From this attitude of mind come the witticisms at which you laugh at first, and the reflections the depth of which astonishes you. From it also come the sudden changes and caprices of a mind that vacillates. At times she will treat you with great tenderness, as if she were repenting of her thoughts and plans ; at others, she will be sullen and impenetrable : in short, she acts the *varium et mutabile femina*, which, up to now, we have been foolish enough to attribute to the feminine constitution. In his anxiety to explain these almost atmospheric changes in woman, Diderot has gone so far as to assign their origin to what he calls the 'savage beast ;' but these anomalies are never to be found in a happy woman.

These symptoms, light as gauze, resemble the clouds known as the flowers of a storm, which scarcely seem to tinge the blue of heaven. Soon the colours take on a deeper hue.

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During this solemn period of thoughtfulness, which, in the words of Madame de Staël, gives to life its poetry, some women, in whom either from design, from a sense of duty, from tenderness, or from hypocrisy, their mothers have inculcated high principles, take the all-engrossing thoughts by which they are assailed as suggestions of the devil, and they are to be seen going regularly to mass, to confession, even to vespers. This sham devotionism begins with the use of luxuriously bound prayer-books, by the help of which the fair sinners vainly endeavour to force themselves to fulfil the duties which religion imposes on them, and which have been neglected for the joys of marriage.

We will now lay down a principle which should be engraved on the memory in letters of fire.

When a young woman suddenly busies herself with long-neglected religious practices, her new way of living always conceals a motive of great importance to her husband's happiness. Out of every hundred women there are at least seventy-nine with whom this sudden return to God means either that they have been indiscreet, or that they are about to be so.

But a symptom so marked, and so decided that every husband who is not a fool can recognise it, is this:

At the time when you were both lost in the delusive delights of the honeymoon, your wife, as became a true lover, always let you have your own way. Happy in being able to give you proofs of a goodwill which you both mistook for love, she would ask you to bid her walk on the edge of the roof, and if you had done so, immediately, as nimble as a squirrel, she would have run about on the tiles. In a word, she would find ineffable delight in sacrificing that 'ego' which made her a being different from you. She would identify herself with your nature, obedient to the vow that came from the heart: *Una caro!*

These charming moods have gradually and imperceptibly disappeared. Hurt in discovering that her own

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will has been reduced to nothing, your wife will now strive to get it back again by means of a scheme which she develops from day to day with ever-increasing assiduity.

This is what is known as the 'married woman's dignity scheme.' Its first effect, of which you alone can judge, is to give to your pleasures an air of reserve and lukewarmness.

According to the vehemence of your sensual passion, you will, during the honeymoon, have experienced a few or many of the twenty-two voluptuous charms created in Greece in olden times by twenty-two different kinds of courtesans especially given up to the cultivation of those delicate branches of one and the same art.

Ignorant and simple-minded, curious and hopeful as she is, your young wife will have taken certain steps in this art, which is as singular as it is little known, and may be recommended to the future author of the 'Physiology of Pleasure.'

Then, on a winter's morning, like the birds that dread the cold of the west, la Fellatrice will fly off in one flight, full of that coquetry by which she cheats desire only to lengthen its burning transports; la Tractatrice, coming from the perfume-laden East where delirious and maddening pleasures are held in honour and respect; la Subagitatrice, daughter of mighty Greece; la Lémane, with her sweet, bewitching pleasures; la Corinthienne, who could, if need be, take the place of them all; and, lastly, the tantalising Phicidisseuse, with devouring, elf-like teeth, the very enamel of which seems endowed with mind. One only will be left you; but one night the brilliant, dazzling Propétide stretches her white wings and flies away, bowing her head like the angel in Rembrandt's picture vanishing from the sight of Abraham, and showing you for the last time the ravishing treasures of which she herself is unconscious and which you alone were empowered

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to contemplate with enraptured gaze, to cajole with caressing hand.

Cut off from these varying shades of pleasure, these caprices of soul, these darts of love, you are reduced to the most vulgar way of loving, the primitive and innocent course pursued by simple Adam with the mother of us all, and which doubtless suggested to the serpent the idea of the temptation. But so decided a symptom is not usual. Most husbands and wives are too good Christians to follow the customs of pagan Greece. We have also ranked among the 'final symptoms' the appearance at the peaceful marriage bed of those shameless pleasures which more often than not are the fruit of an illegitimate passion. In due time and place we will treat more fully of this interesting sign : at this stage the disease may turn to that indifference, or even repugnance, on which you alone are in a position to set a value.

At the same time that she is thus ennobling by her own dignified bearing the aims of marriage, your wife will contend that she ought to have her opinion and you yours. 'When a woman marries,' she will say, 'she does not promise to renounce the right to exercise her reason. Are women really slaves? The laws of man may make the body captive, but the mind! . . . No! God has created it too much after his own image for tyrants to lay hands upon it.'

These ideas are the outcome of an education in which you have indulged her too freely, or of thoughts which you have allowed her to cherish. A meditation will be devoted to the subject of 'Education in Married Life.'

Then your wife will begin to talk about : '*My* bedroom,' '*my* bed,' '*my* rooms.' To many of your questions the answer will be : 'Oh! that does not concern you, my dear!' or 'Men have their share in the direction of the house and women have theirs.' Or again, laughing at the man who interferes in the house,

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she will maintain that 'there are some things that men can never understand.' The number of things which you 'can never understand' will increase every day.

One fine morning you will find two altars in the place of the one you had raised—your wife's and your own will have become two separate altars, and they will draw farther and farther apart, and all because of the 'married woman's dignity scheme.'

Then are formed the opinions which follow below, which will be impressed on you, in spite of yourself, by a certain 'living power' of very ancient standing, and of which but little is known. The power of steam, of the horse, of man, or of water, are all good things, but they are not to be compared with the moral force with which nature has endowed women: it may be called the 'power of the rattle,' and it consists in a continuous succession of sounds, in an exact repetition of the same words, a complete circle of the same ideas, and, by dint of simply hearing them again and again, you will agree in order to be quit of the discussion. In this way the 'power of the rattle' will prove to you:

'That you are very fortunate to have such a good wife;

'That she has honoured you by marrying you;

'That women often see things more clearly than men;

'That you ought to ask your wife's advice on every thing, and nearly always follow it;

'That you ought to *respect* the mother of your children—honour her and trust in her;

'That the best way to avoid being deceived is to become reconciled to a woman's sensitiveness—because, according to certain old-fashioned ideas that we have had the weakness to countenance, it is impossible for a man to prevent his wife from "minotaurising" him;

'That his lawful wife is a man's best friend;

'That a woman is mistress in her own house, queen in her drawing-room,' and so on.

Those who try firmly to resist these triumphs of

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the woman's dignity over the man's power come under the category of the fore-ordained.

Then quarrels begin, investing the husband, in the eyes of the wife, with a tyrant's air. His tyranny is always a splendid excuse for her 'indiscretion.' In these airy discussions she proves to her family, to his, to all the world, to the man himself, that he is in the wrong. If for the sake of peace, or even of love, he recognises the rights which his wife claims as her due, he gives her an advantage which she will profit by for ever after. A husband, like a Government, should never acknowledge himself in the wrong. If he does, his power will be left far behind in the race by the power a woman gains by her 'married woman's dignity': if he does, all will be lost. From that moment she will gain concession after concession, until at last she drives him from *her* bed.

Woman being shrewd, ingenious, spiteful, and having all her time to devote to the saying of cutting things, will soon hold you up to ridicule during the momentary conflict of your two opinions. The day on which she succeeds in making you an object of ridicule, marks the end of your happiness; your power will vanish. A woman who has once laughed at her husband can no longer love him. To the woman who loves, a man should be an imposing personage, possessing strength and grandeur. A family cannot exist without despotism. Nations, take note of that!

Now the difficulties of deciding upon what course to pursue when the man finds himself in such a serious plight, the all-important plan of campaign in marriage, in fact, is to be found completely and precisely set out in the second and third parts of this book. This vademecum of marital artifice will teach you how to raise yourself in the eyes of your wife, that airy spirit, that 'lace soul,' as Napoleon called her. You will learn how to display a heart of iron, how to go through this little domestic war without once surrendering the empire

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of your will—for if you do, you compromise your happiness once and for all. In fact, if you abdicate, your wife will judge by that alone that you are without backbone; you will be in her eyes a *man* no longer.

But this is not the place to develop the theories and principles by which a husband can make use of harsh measures and yet preserve his good manners; we will only point out the importance of what is to follow, and continue.

At this critical point you will find that your wife will begin to manœuvre for the right to go out by herself.

Once you were her god, her idol; now her devotion is such that she can see the rents in the dress of her Saint.

‘ Good Heavens, my dear ! ’ said Madame de la Vallière to her husband, ‘ how clumsily you put on your sword ! M. de Richelieu has a way of keeping it close to his side which you would do well to imitate; it is in much better taste. ’

‘ My dear, you could not tell me in a better way that we have been married five months ! ’ replied the Duke—a famous repartee of the reign of Louis XV.

She will study your character to find weapons to use against you. This scrutiny, held in holy horror by love, is evident in the thousand and one little traps which she sets in order that she may have justification for saying that you scold her and ill-treat her; for when a woman has no excuse for ‘ minotaurising ’ her husband, she will try to make one.

She will perhaps sit down to a meal without waiting for you.

She will point out certain things which you have not noticed when driving through the town; she will sing in your presence without any qualms; she will interrupt you sometimes, or not answer you—proving in twenty different ways that she enjoys all her faculties to the full when in your company.

She will try entirely to abolish your influence in the administration of the house and attempt to become sole

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mistress of your fortune. At first the struggle will be a distraction for her mind, empty or over-excited as the case may be ; later on she will discover new reasons for scoffing in your very opposition.

The time-honoured expressions will not fail her, and we Frenchmen give way so quickly before sarcasm and chaff.

From time to time she will be a martyr to sick headaches or agitation of the nerves ; but these symptoms require a separate meditation.

In society she will speak to you without a blush, and look you boldly in the face.

She will begin to cavil at your least actions, because they are opposed to her own ideas and to her secret plans.

She will no longer trouble to look after you, nor even to find out if you have all you want. You will no longer be the standard of her judgments and comparisons.

Following the example of Louis XIV., who took to his mistresses bouquets of orange-blossom which were placed on his table every morning by the head-gardener at Versailles, M. de Vivonne gave his wife rare flowers nearly every day when they were first married. One evening he found that they had not been put in water as usual, and were lying half dead on a table.

‘ Oh, ho ! ’ said he, ‘ if I am not a fool already, I shall be one very soon.’

You are travelling for a week, and you get no letters, or one with three blank pages—a symptom !

You come home riding a fine horse of which you are very fond ; your wife inquires between your kisses after the horse and his corn—a symptom !

You can add others to these for yourself. Throughout this book we have always tried to paint in fresco, and leave the miniatures to you. These symptoms, hidden beneath the accidents of daily life, are subject to infinite variation, for they depend on character. While one will find a symptom in the way in which

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a shawl is put on, another will need a good fillip before ever noticing his companion's indifference.

One fine spring morning, the day after a ball maybe, or the day before a party in the country, the situation enters upon its last stage. Your wife is feeling bored and legitimate pleasure has no longer any attractions for her. Her senses, her imagination, the waywardness of her nature perhaps, cry out for a lover. But she dares not yet enter upon an intrigue of which the consequences and the details terrify her. You are still of some consequence in her eyes ; you still weigh a little in the balance, but very little. The struggle that has arisen in your wife's heart becomes more real and more perilous than ever it was before, and she is, as it were, brought face to face with the enemy. Soon it comes to this, that the more dangers and risks there are to run, the more she burns to cast herself headlong into the enchanting abyss of fears, delights, anguish, and pleasure. Her imagination is on fire ; it glitters. The future glows with romantic and mysterious colours. She thinks in her heart that she is about to take her part in that solemn struggle women know so well. Her whole being is in turmoil, agitated and excited. Her powers of perception are three times more intense than before, and she judges of the future by the present. The few pleasures that you have bestowed on her plead against you ; for she is not concerned so much with the pleasures which she has enjoyed as with those she hopes to enjoy later on. Does not her imagination picture greater happiness with the lover whom the law denies her, than with you ? In fact, she finds delight in her terror and terror in her delight. Then she finds herself loving this imminent danger, this sword of Damocles which you have hung above her head, preferring the frenzied agonies of passion to conjugal vacuity which is worse than death, indifference which is rather the absence of all feeling than a feeling in itself.

You have, perhaps, to exchange amenities at the

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Treasury, or to make a detailed statement at the bank, or a settlement on the Stock Exchange, or a speech at the Chambre ; you, young man, who, with so many others, swore so often and so earnestly to defend your happiness in defending your wife, what can you say against these desires of hers which are, after all, so natural ? For, with these ardent souls, to live is to feel ; the moment they cease to feel they are dead. The law, in virtue of which you take precedence of your wife, produces this almost involuntary ‘minotaurism.’ ‘It is,’ said d’Alembert, ‘an outcome of the laws of motion !’ Well, then, where are your means of defence ?’

Alas ! if your wife has not yet actually taken a bite of the serpent’s apple, the serpent is at her side ; you may be asleep, but we are awake, and our book is just beginning.

Without going into the question of how many husbands, of the five hundred thousand whom this work concerns, remain among the fore-ordained ; how many are unhappily married ; how many have made a bad start ; without wishing to see whether in this numerous body there are few or many who could display the qualifications necessary for the struggle against the approaching danger, we will in the second and third parts of the book make known the ways in which the minotaur may be defeated and woman’s virtue preserved immaculate. But if fate, the devil, celibacy, chance, are determined on your ruin, you may perhaps find consolation in following the thread of intrigue, and in assisting at the battles in which all homes are involved. Many men are of so easy-going a disposition that on their being shown the very spot, on having the reason explained to them, or the means described, they will merely scratch their foreheads, rub their hands together, stamp, and be satisfied.

THE EPILOGUE

NINTH MEDITATION.

THE EPILOGUE.

IN accordance with our promise, the first part of this work has stated the general causes that bring all marriages to the crisis we have just described ; and in putting before you these matrimonial prolegomena we have shown how the evil may be avoided by describing the errors which bring it upon you.

But these preliminary considerations will surely be incomplete if, after having endeavoured to throw light on the incongruity of our ideas, our manners and our laws with regard to a question which affects the life of almost every human being, we do not try to indicate (in a short peroration) the political causes of this social infirmity. After having pointed out the secret vices of an institution, is it not proper, in a philosophical examination, to seek to know why and how it has become vicious ?

The system of laws and of morals as regards women and marriage which prevails in France to-day is the fruit of ancient beliefs and traditions such as are no longer in harmony with those eternal principles of right and justice which have grown out of the great revolution of 1789.

France has been shaken by three great upheavals : the Roman Conquest, the introduction of Christianity, and the invasion of the Franks. Each event has left a deep impression on the soil, the laws, the morals, and the spirit of the nation.

Greece, with one foot in Europe and the other in Asia, was influenced in its choice of matrimonial institutions by the heat of its climate ; she derived

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them from the East, whither her philosophers, her legislators, and her poets went to study the hidden mysteries of ancient Egypt and Chaldea. It was the law of Greece and Ionia (necessitated by the burning sun of Asia) rigidly to shut up their women. They were confined only to the marble statues of their private apartments. When the country had dwindled to a single town, or at any rate to a territory of inconsiderable size, the courtesans, who still clung to religion and the arts, sufficed for the early passions of the young men (comparatively few in number) whose powers were later on absorbed in the violent gymnastic exercises exacted by the military discipline of those heroic times.

At the beginning of its proud career, Rome went to Greece for legislative principles such as would be suited to the climate of Italy, and stamped on the forehead of the married woman the seal of utter slavery. The Senate was fully alive to the importance of virtuous principles to a republic, and introduced strictness into their morals by greatly increasing the powers of husband and parent. Women's dependence was written on everything. Confinement in the East became a duty, a moral obligation, a virtue. The Romans raised temples to chastity, and consecrated temples to the holiness of marriage; they appointed censors, they instituted the marriage portion and the sumptuary laws, they exacted respect for matrons, and made further enactments under the Roman law. Thus three rapes, either attempted or successfully carried out, were the cause of three revolutions; thus it was looked upon as a great event, and one which could not take place until the passing of an edict, for women to appear upon the political scene! Those illustrious Roman women, condemned to be neither wives nor mothers, passed their lives in seclusion, rearing lords and masters of the world. Rome had no courtesans, because the attentions of her youth were everlastingly engrossed in warfare! If in later years debauchery crept in, it was with the despo-

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tism of the emperors ; and even then the prejudices founded on their ancient morals were so strong that Rome never allowed her women to go upon the stage. Such facts as these are not without significance to this short history of marriage in France.

When they overcame the Gauls, the Romans imposed their laws on the conquered race ; but they were quite unable to destroy either the profound respect for women which our ancestors had, or those ancient superstitions by which they were looked upon as divine agents. Eventually, however, the laws of the Romans prevailed over all others in that country, which originally was opposed to the 'written law,' that is *Gallia togata*, and their matrimonial principles penetrated more or less into the countries that followed an unwritten law.

But during this struggle concerning laws and morals, the Franks invaded Gaul, and bestowed on it the dear name 'France.' These warriors, coming from the North, brought with them the system of gallantry of the West, where the climate is so cold that in the intercourse of the sexes there is no necessity for either plurality of women or the jealous precautions of the East. On the contrary, these almost divine beings made private life more beautiful by the animation of their emotions. The benumbed senses invited a variety of energetic and subtle powers, a diversity of expression, a quickness of thought, and such chimerical barriers as are set up by coquetry,—methods of which some of the principles have been laid down in our First Part, and which suit the temperate climate of France to perfection.

To the East, then, belong passion and delirium, harems and flowing brown hair, amorous deities, pomp, poetry and statuary. To the West, the liberty of women, fair hair and the power it gives them, gallantry, fairies, witches, rapture, and the tender emotions of sadness and of enduring love.

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The two systems, starting from the opposite ends of the earth, come face to face with one another in France,—in France, where one district, that of the *langue d'oc*, contented itself with oriental beliefs, while the other, the *langue d'oïl*, became the fatherland of those traditions which attribute to women the power of magic. In the latter district, love asked for mysteries; in the former, to see was to love.

When this contest was at its height, Christianity became triumphant in France. Its preachers were women, and it sanctioned the divinity of a woman who, in the forests of la Bretagne, of la Vendée, and of the Ardennes, under the title of Notre-Dame, took the place of more than one idol in the hollows of the old druid oaks.

If the Christian religion, which is essentially a code of politics and morals, endowed these good creatures with souls, if it proclaimed the equality of all before God, and so strengthened the chivalrous doctrines of the North, such advantages were counter-balanced by the residence of the sovereign pontiff at Rome, where he had appointed himself heir; by the spread of the Latin language, which in the Middle Ages came to be the language of Europe; and by the strong interest which the monks, the scribes, and the lawyers took in establishing the codes discovered by a soldier at the sack of Amalfi.

In this way the two principles of slavery and sovereignty, both strengthened by new weapons, were brought face to face.

The Salic law, although an error from a legal point of view, brought about the triumph of civil and political slavery without diminishing the power which the morals of the country gave to women, for the enthusiasm for chivalry which filled Europe upheld the cause of morality against that of law.

It was in this way that the strange phenomenon presented from time to time by our national character

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and our legislation originally came into existence ; for since those epochs during which France seemed to be for ever on the brink of a revolution, when a philosophic soul would rise up and review its history, France has been a prey to convulsion after convulsion ; Feudalism, the Crusades, the Reformation, the struggle between the King and the Aristocracy, Despotism, and Sacerdotalism have in turn held her so tightly in their grasp that woman has been as it were the butt of the old contradictions arising from the conflict of the three principal events of which we have sketched the outlines. Could man trouble himself about woman, her political education and her marriage, while Feudalism was bringing the Throne into question, or the Reformation was threatening both Feudalism and the Throne, or the people were being lost sight of between Sacerdotalism and the Empire ? To use a metaphor of Madame Necker, women during these great events played the part of the straw in a case of china : they counted for nothing, yet without them everything would have been broken.

A married woman in France is like a conquered queen, a slave, free and a prisoner at the same time ; in consequence of the struggle between two principles, contradictions sprang up in the midst of the social order, with many very strange results. Woman's physical constitution being but little understood, what was really a malady with her was treated as a prodigy, witchcraft, or some very vile form of wickedness. These beings, treated by the law like prodigal children and kept in tutelage, were deified by the morals of the time. Like the freedmen of the Emperors, they disposed of crowns, battles, fortunes, master-strokes of policy, crimes, virtues, simply by the twinkle of an eye, and yet they possessed nothing, not even themselves. They were as happy as they were unhappy. Armed with their weakness, and made strong by their instincts, they soared above the sphere in which the laws ought to have placed them, all-powerful for evil, powerless for good ;

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gaining no credit for the virtues which were expected of them, having no excuse for their vices ; accused of ignorance, yet debarred from knowledge ; neither mothers nor wives. With plenty of time to devote to the fostering of their passions, they gave themselves up to the coquetry of the Franks, although like the Roman women they were shut up in castles and occupied with the rearing of warriors. No definite system of legislation was adopted by the country, so that the women followed the natural bent of their minds, and there were as many Marion De Lormes as Cornelias, as many virtues as vices. They were beings as imperfect as the laws that governed them—looked upon by some as being something between a man and an animal—spiteful creatures which the law could not bind in too many chains—one of many others destined by nature for man's pleasure ;—by others, looked upon as angels in exile, sources of happiness and love, the only beings who in any way responded to the sentiments of man, and whose miseries could only be atoned for by idolatrous worship. How could unity, which was absent from political institutions, be present in morals?

Woman was then what man and circumstances made her, instead of being what the climate and the institutions of the country ought to have made her ; sold, married against her will by virtue of the power belonging to the Roman father, she found herself, at the same time as she fell under the despotic sway of her husband who desired her confinement, tempted by the only reprisal open to her. The consequence was that as soon as men ceased to be completely occupied with intestine wars, she became dissolute, for the same reason that she retained her virtue as long as civil strife was raging. Any intelligent man can put the shading into this picture ; the crude outline of fact teaches us its lesson, and we are not concerned with the tender shades of poetry.

The Revolution was too much occupied with breaking down and building up again ; it had too many

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enemies, or it came perhaps too near to the deplorable times of the Regency and of Louis XV., to consider the place that women ought to take in the social order.

The remarkable men who set up that immortal monument—our present code of laws—were nearly all law-givers of the old school, much impressed with the excellence of the Roman laws; and, moreover, to found political institutions was no part of their scheme. Sons of the Revolution as they were, they agreed with her in thinking that a careful narrowing down of the Law of Divorce and the furnishing of fuller opportunities for dutiful obedience were improvements enough. Indeed, in the light of the ancient order of things, these by themselves seemed great innovations.

To-day the question as to which of the two principles is to triumph, weakened, it is true, by so much that has happened since and by the progress of knowledge, still remains to be treated by enlightened legislators. The past contains lessons that ought to bear fruit in the future. Shall the things of the past speak to us in vain?

The development of Eastern principles has brought with it eunuchs and harems; the degenerate morals of France have produced the plague of courtesans and the still greater plague that is attacking our marriages: thus, to borrow a phrase of a contemporary, the East sacrifices men and equitable laws to fatherhood; France sacrifices women and chastity. Neither the East nor France has attained to the end which ought to be ever in view, namely—happiness. A man is no more sure of the love of the women of a harem, than the husband in France is of being the father of his children; and marriage is not worth what it costs. It is high time that further sacrifices to this institution should be prevented, and that the foundations of a greater sum of human happiness be laid by bringing our customs and our laws into conformity with our climate.

Constitutional government, that happy mean of

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two extreme political systems, despotism and democracy, would seem to point to the necessity of mingling in a similar fashion the two established rules relating to marriage which up to now in France have run counter to one another. The liberty which we have so strongly recommended for the young would, if it were granted them, remedy this mass of evils of which we have pointed out the origin, by exposing the evil results of enslaving our daughters. Let us grant to youth the passions, flirtations, love with its terrors, love with its delights, and the whole troop of tempting pleasures that followed in the train of the Franks. In the spring-time of life, no fault is irreparable: Hymen will emerge from the midst of trials and temptations well armed in confidence, relieved of hatred; and love will be vindicated.

With such a change in our morals, the shameful plague of the woman of the streets would die out of itself. It is during the period when a man is filled with the frankness and diffidence of adolescence that his happiness is least likely to be affected in the event of his having great and true passions to contend with. His soul is happy in its efforts, whatever they may be; provided only that it is in action, that it is stirred and excited, it is of little consequence if its powers are even used against itself. In this statement, which might have been made by anybody, lies the secret of the legislation of the future, the secret of peace and happiness. Then, again, scholarship has lately made such rapid strides that the most fiery of the Mirabeaus of the future will be able to work off his superfluous energy both on the exigencies of a tender passion and on the mastering of a science. How many young people would not have been spared a life of debauchery if they had applied themselves steadily to some employment, and thus added a further safeguard against the dangers of first love, which, especially if it is a pure love, presents obstacles enough

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of itself. As a matter of fact, where is the young girl who does not wish to prolong the delightful youthfulness of her feelings, who does not feel proud to have a lover who understands her thoroughly, who does not have the intoxicating scruples born of her timidity, and the modesty of her secret dealings with herself to set over against the young desires of a lover as inexperienced as she is herself? The gallantry of the Franks and its delights will be the prerogative of youth, and there will be established naturally that perfect agreement of soul, mind, and character, of habit, of temperament, and of fortune, which carries in its train that blessed state of equilibrium which is so necessary a condition of happiness for man and wife. This system would rest on a far firmer and far truer basis if girls were carefully cut out of their father's wills; or if they were married, as in the United States, without a dowry at all, so that men might be compelled to make their choice according to the pledges of happiness offered by their virtues, their character, or their talents.

The Roman system could well be applied to the married women, who as young girls had made full use of their liberty. Occupied exclusively with that most important of all the duties of a mother, the earliest education of children, engaged in giving birth to and in maintaining that happiness (so well depicted in the fourth book of *Julie*) which lasts for ever, they will present in their homes, like Roman women of old, a living image of that Providence whose beneficent beams shine everywhere, although the source of the light cannot be discerned. The laws relating to the unfaithfulness of married women would have to be exceptionally severe. Disgrace even greater than that of corporal punishment or imprisonment would be its reward. France has looked on at women mounted on asses for imaginary crimes of witchcraft, and more than one innocent woman has died of the shame of it.

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There lies the secret of the marriage laws of the future. The daughters of Milet were cured of marriage by death; the Senate condemned women who had done themselves to death to be dragged naked through the streets on a hurdle, and maidens preferred to resign themselves to life.

Women and marriage will not be respected in France until the radical change in our morals which we so earnestly desire has been brought about. This profound thought has inspired the two most beautiful productions of an immortal genius. *L'Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* are no more than two eloquent pleas for this system. Their words will ring through the ages, because Rousseau has discovered the true origin of the laws and the morals of the future. In advising mothers to give the breast to their children, Jean-Jacques rendered to virtue a great service; but the age in which he lived was too corrupt to understand the noble lessons contained in his two poems; it is only right to add, too, that the philosopher was conquered by the poet, and in leaving in Julie's heart after her marriage some faint remembrance of her first love, he has been tempted by a poetic situation more touching, it is true, than the truth he wished to spread, but less useful to mankind.

Yet, if marriage in France is a huge contract to which all men hold tacitly in order to give greater relish to the passions, more secrecy and more mystery to love, more piquancy to women; if a woman is a drawing-room ornament, a fashionable puppet, a mere clothes-peg rather than a being whose functions in the world of politics coincide with the prosperity of a country, the glory of a nation; rather than, a creature whose services can be compared with those of men for usefulness . . . I confess that this theory and these lengthy considerations would vanish before such all-important destinies!

But we have drained accomplished facts to the dregs long enough in our endeavour to extract a drop of

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philosophy; long enough have we sacrificed the dominating passion of the present day to a passion for history; let us return to the manners of to-day. Let us once more put on the cap and bells and take up that bauble out of which Rabelais made a sceptre in the days gone by, and follow the course of this analysis, without assigning more seriousness to a pleasantry than it can stand, without treating serious things more humorously than they will allow.

PART II.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MEANS OF DEFENCE.

‘To be or not to be.’—Hamlet.

TENTH MEDITATION.

A TREATISE ON MARITAL POLICY.

WE imagine that when a man has arrived at the position described in our First Part, his heart is still capable of beating faster at the idea of his wife belonging to another, and that his passion can still be aroused, fanned either by self-esteem or pride. For if he cared no more for his wife, he would merely be the last man but one to her, and he would deserve his fate.

At this juncture it is difficult for a husband to avoid some mistakes, for, with the majority of husbands, the art of governing a woman is even less understood than that of making a good choice. Nevertheless the husband's policy is little more than the constant application of three principles which should form the very root of his conduct. The first, never to believe what a woman says ; the second, always to ascertain the spirit of her actions and not stop at the letter ; and the third, that a woman is never so much a gossip as when she is silent, and never acts with so much energy as when she is in repose.

From this moment you may be likened to a horseman who, being mounted on a high-spirited animal, is

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obliged to keep a very watchful eye on him if he would avoid being thrown.

But the art lies much less in a knowledge of the principles than of the way in which they may be applied; to reveal them to the uninitiated is to put a razor into the hands of a monkey. The first and most vital of your duties is dissimulation, and it is here that almost all husbands fail. Most of them, when they notice in their wives a rather too plainly marked symptom of 'minotaurism,' immediately show signs of an insulting lack of confidence. They develop an acrimonious disposition which shows itself either in their conversation or in their behaviour; fear shines in their souls like a gas-jet under a glass globe, and it lights up their faces as clearly as it explains their conduct.

Now, a woman who has twelve hours of the day to think about you and observe you, reads the suspicions written on your brow the very moment they are formed. She will never pardon so gratuitous an insult. There is no remedy; all is over; and the very next day, if she can, she will join the ranks of the indiscreet.

You ought then, being in the position of a belligerent, to begin by pretending that you still have unbounded confidence in her. If you try to foster the illusion by means of honeyed words, you are lost; she will not believe you, for she has a policy as well as you have. Finesse as well as good nature must be displayed in your actions, if you would create in her, without her being aware of it, that precious feeling of security which makes her 'prick up her ears,' and only requires of you a very occasional use of curb or spur.

But how dare we compare a horse—the most open and straightforward of all animals—to a being whose vagaries of mind and whose predilections render her at all times more wily than Paul of Venice himself, the most awful counsellor the 'Ten' ever had; more dissembling than a king; cleverer than Louis XI.; deeper than Macchiavelli; as subtle as Hobbes; as

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shrewd as Voltaire; more compliant than the fiancée of Mamolin; and who is on her guard with no one in the world but you.

Further, to this dissimulation, by the aid of which the springs of your action ought to be as invisible as those of the universe, you must now add absolute self-command. That diplomatic imperturbability of which Talleyrand boasted so proudly will be amongst the least of your qualities; his exquisite politeness and the charm of his manners must breathe through all your intercourse. Your mentor hereby expressly forbids you to use a horse-whip if you wish to be successful in the management of your fair Andalusian.

LXI. When a man beats his mistress . . . he inflicts a wound, but when he beats his wife, he commits suicide!

How can we conceive of a government without police, action without force, a disarmed power? . . . That is a problem which we will endeavour to solve in future meditations. But there are still two preliminary observations to be made. They will yield us two other theories which will treat of the application of all the mechanical means which we are about to propose to you. An example from real life may refresh the dryness of this dissertation; let us leave the book for a while and go and work upon the soil.

In the year 1822, on a fine morning in January, I was walking along the Boulevards of Paris from the peaceful district of the Marais to the fashionable Chaussée d'Antin, and observing for the first time, not without a certain philosophic enjoyment, those strange alterations of face and varieties of dress which, from the Rue du Pas-de-la-Mule to the Madeleine, make a different little world of each portion of the Boulevard, and afford an instructive sample of the manners of that region of Paris. Having as yet no conception of the things life might have in store for me, and hardly doubting that one day I should have the audacity to enter the estate

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of matrimony, I was on my way to lunch with one of my college friends, who was saddled (perhaps rather too early in life) with a wife and two children. My old professor of mathematics lived at but a short distance from my friend's house, and I had promised myself a visit to the worthy mathematician before feasting on the more delicate morsel of friendship. I easily found my way into a sanctum where everything was covered with dust and gave evidence of the serious pursuits of the scholar. A surprise awaited me. I saw a pretty woman seated horse-back fashion on the arm of a chair; she gave me the conventional nod which hostesses reserve for people with whom they are not acquainted, barely concealing a look of sulkiness that was clouding her face as I entered. From this I guessed I had come at an inopportune moment. Engaged, doubtless, in solving an equation, my former master did not at once raise his head. I shook my right hand at the lady, much as a fish might shake its fins, and prepared to retire on tip-toe, smiling at her in a mysterious fashion, as much as to say, 'It shall not be I who will prevent you from causing him to be unfaithful to Urania.' She moved her head with a charming vivacity that is quite indescribable.

'Don't go, my dear fellow, don't go!' cried the geometrician. 'It is my wife!'

I bowed again. . . . O Coulon! If only you could have been there to applaud the only one of your pupils who understood your anacreontic remark concerning the bow! The effect was electric; for Madame la Professeuse, as the Germans would call her, blushed, and got up quickly as if to go, at the same time making me a tiny little bow, as who should say: 'Adorable!'

Her husband stopped her, saying: 'Wait a moment, my dear—it is one of my pupils.'

The young woman lifted her head towards the scholar, just as a bird perched on a branch might stretch his neck to peck at a grain of corn.

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‘It is impossible!’ said he, with a sigh; ‘I will prove it to you by $a + b$.’

‘Oh! please don’t trouble to do that,’ she cried, blinking her eyes and nodding towards me.

If only it had been algebra, my master would have understood the look; but it was as unintelligible as Chinese to him, and he continued:

‘Look here, my dear, you shall judge for yourself; we have ten thousand francs a year’

At these words I moved towards the door, as if seized with an overwhelming desire to examine some pen-and-ink sketches that hung near it. My discretion was rewarded by an eloquent look. Alas! she did not know that I could have played the part of *Fine-Oreille in Fortunio*—the man who could hear the truffles grow.

‘The principles of general economy,’ said my master, ‘demand that not more than two-tenths of one’s income should be put aside for rent and servants’ wages; now, our house and servants cost us a hundred pounds. I give you twelve hundred francs for your dress.’ (Here he weighed every syllable.) ‘The food,’ he went on, ‘amounts to four thousand francs; our children cost at least twenty-five pounds; I take for myself only eight hundred francs. The laundry, wood, and lighting come to about a thousand; there remains therefore, as you see, only six hundred francs, and this amount has never been sufficient for unforeseen expenses. To buy the diamond cross we should have to take three thousand francs from our capital; and once we had entered upon that path, my darling, there would soon be every reason for leaving this Paris that you love so well, and going into the country to retrieve our fallen fortunes. The children are growing up, and our expenses increase quickly enough; therefore, be a good girl!’

‘I shall have to,’ said she; ‘but you will be the only man in Paris who has not given his wife a new year’s gift.’

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And she went off like a schoolboy who has just finished an imposition. My master raised his head with an air of relief when he saw the door close behind her. He rubbed his hands together; we talked of the war with Spain, and I went out again and along the Rue de Provence, no more thinking that I had just received the first part of a great lesson in matrimony than I thought of the conquest of Constantinople by General Diebitsch. I reached my friend's house just as they were sitting down to lunch, after having waited for the regulation half-hour sacred to the exigencies of gastronomy. It was, I think, as she was cutting a *pâté de foie gras*, that my pretty hostess said to her husband, with an air of deliberation—'If you were nice, Alexander, you would give me that pair of earrings we saw at Fossin's—the pair with the diamond sprays.'

'Who would not be married?' cried my friend, cheerfully, taking from his pocket-book three thousand-franc notes, and dazzling the sparkling eyes of his wife with them. 'I can no more resist the pleasure of offering them you than you can resist taking them. To-day is the anniversary of the day I first saw you. The diamonds may remind you of it!'

'Naughty boy!' she said, with a ravishing smile.

She put two fingers to her breast and took out a bunch of violets, and threw them with childish glee at my friend's nose. Alexander handed over the price of the diamonds, crying out: 'I saw the flowers right enough.'

Never shall I forget the quickness, and the greedy joy with which, like a cat putting her paw on a mouse, the little woman seized upon the three notes, rolled them up, blushing with pleasure, and put them in the place of the violets which had been scenting her bosom. I could not help thinking of our professor. I could see no other difference between his pupil and himself than that which exists between an economical man and a spendthrift, not thinking for a moment but

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that of the two he who apparently knew best how to reckon, reckoned the worse. The lunch went off very gaily. We were soon installed in a small, newly-decorated drawing-room, seated by a fire that warmed the fibres and made them expand as in spring-time. I felt myself called upon to compliment this loving couple on the furnishing of their little snuggerly.

‘It is a pity it all costs so much,’ said my friend; ‘but, of course, the nest must be worthy of the bird! Why the deuce do you go and compliment me on hangings that are not yet paid for? You remind me, while I am trying to digest my lunch, that I still owe two thousand francs to a beastly upholsterer.’

At these words the mistress of the house appeared to make a mental inventory of the pretty boudoir; her bright face became thoughtful. Alexander took me by the arm and dragged me over to a window-seat.

‘Have you by any chance three thousand francs to lend me?’ he said, in a low voice. ‘I have only from ten to twelve thousand a year, and this year . . .’

‘Alexander!’ cried the dear creature, interrupting her husband and running towards us, holding out the three notes, ‘Alexander, I see that it is madness . . .’

‘What business is it of yours?’ he replied; ‘just keep the money.’

‘But I am ruining you, my love! I ought to have known that you love me far too much for me to confide my wishes to you.’

‘Keep it, my dear; it is a good find. Why, I shall soon win that back at play this winter!’

‘Play!’ she said, with a terrified look. ‘Alexander, take your notes! Come, I wish it.’

‘No, no,’ replied my friend, pushing away the small delicate white hand; ‘are you not going to Madame de ——’s ball on Thursday?’

‘I will remember what you asked me,’ I said to my friend; and, with a bow to the wife, I took myself off; but I gathered, from what I had witnessed, and what

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I imagined was to come, that my anacreontic bows did not have much effect. 'He must be a fool,' thought I, as I went along, 'to talk of three thousand francs to a law student!'

Five days later I was at Madame de ——'s, whose balls were becoming the fashion. In the quadrilles, amid the dazzling brightness of the dancers, who should I see but my friend's wife and the wife of the mathematician. Madame Alexander was arrayed in a dress that was perfectly ravishing, a few flowers and some white muslin its only ornament. She wore a simple little child's cross attached to a black velvet ribbon, which enhanced the whiteness of her perfumed skin, and two pendants of gold filigree adorned her ears. On the neck of Madame la Professeuse glittered a splendid diamond cross.

'Now, that is curious!' said I to a man who had not as yet read very deeply in the great book of the world, and who had not as yet deciphered the heart of any woman.

The man was myself. I felt a desire to ask these two pretty women to dance, simply because my fears were allayed by my knowing of a secret wherewith to start a conversation with both of them.

'Well, madame, you have got your cross? . . .'
I said to the first.

'Of course,' she replied, with a sphinx-like smile.

'What! No diamond sprays?'
I asked my friend's wife.

'Ah!' she said, 'I enjoyed them for a whole luncheon! but, you see, it has ended in my converting Alexander'

'He was easily brought round!'

A triumphant look was her only answer.

After eight years, during which it had never once entered my mind, this scene came suddenly to my memory, and by the light of the candles, in the sparkle of the diamond clusters, I clearly read a lesson in morality. Yes, woman has a horror of being compelled

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to admit the truth of any particular statement ; to be persuaded she must be enticed, and then she will play the part assigned to her by nature. To let her have the best of an argument is to grant her a favour ; but exact reasoning irritates, and in the long run annihilates her. To govern her, then, one must use those means of which she so often avails herself—feeling and sentiment. Thus, in his wife, and not in himself, will a man find the elements of his despotism ; as for the diamond, he must use it as a set-off over against herself. To know how to give diamond earrings, and at the same time get them back again, is a secret applicable to the smallest details of life.

The second conclusion I came to was this : there is an Indian proverb that says, ‘ He who knows how to bestow one gold coin, knows how to bestow a hundred thousand.’ I go further than this piece of Asiatic wisdom, and say that he who can govern one woman can govern a nation. As a matter of fact, the two are analogous. Must not a husband’s policy resemble that of a king ? Do we not see kings trying to amuse the people while depriving them of their liberty ; throwing at their heads food for a single day to make them forget the misery of a whole year ; preaching to them not to steal, and plundering them the while ; and saying to them : ‘ It seems to me, if I were the people, I should be good ? ’

England will furnish us with a precedent for the husband’s behaviour at home. Those who have eyes must have seen that from the moment the art of governing was brought to a state of perfection in that country, the Whigs seldom came into power. A long Tory Government has always followed on the administration of a short-lived Liberal Cabinet. The orators of the national party are like rats nibbling at a rotten basket—their holes are stopped up the minute they scent the nuts and bacon in the royal larder.

Woman is the Whig in your government. When

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she has got to the position in which we left her a short time back, it is only natural that she should aspire to attain to more than one privilege. Shut your eyes to her intrigues, let her waste her strength in clambering half way up the steps to your throne, and just when she thinks she can reach the sceptre, cast her, gently and with infinite pity, back to earth, crying, 'Bravo!' and encouraging her to hope for a speedy triumph. The cunning of this method ought to warrant the use of any means you like to choose from your arsenal in order to gain ascendancy over your wife.

Such are the general principles which a husband should follow, if he would avoid mistakes in the government of his little kingdom.

Now in spite of the minority at the Council of Maçon (Montesquieu, who might be said to have foretold constitutional government, has said somewhere that in assemblies wisdom is always on the side of the minority), we perceive that a woman has both a body and a soul, and we begin by examining the means by which one may gain a mastery over the latter. The operations of the mind, whatever may be said on the subject, are far more noble than those of the body; and we place knowledge before cookery, and education before hygiene.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

EDUCATION IN MARRIED LIFE.

To educate women or not to educate them, that is the question. Of all the questions we have mooted, this is the only one that affords two extremes, and, what is more, it has no middle course. Knowledge and ignorance are the two irreconcilable terms of the problem. Between these two chasms we seem to see Louis XVIII. summing up the happiness of the thir-

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teenth century and the misery of the nineteenth. Seated in the middle of the see-saw which he so well knew how to set going by his own weight, he would meditate on the fanatical ignorance of a lay brother, the apathy of a serf, the glittering horse-shoes on a banneret, at one end ; he would hear the cry, ' France et Montjoie Saint-Denis ! ' But he goes to the other end and smiles as he sees the arrogance of a manufacturer, who is captain of the National Guard, a stockbroker's smart brougham, the simple dress of a French peer who has become a journalist and is sending his son to the Polytechnic school ; then, again, he sees costly materials, the newspapers, the steam-engines ; and he drinks his coffee from a cup of Sèvres china, at the bottom of which still gleams the crowned ' N.'

' Away with civilisation ! away with thought ! . . . should be your cry. You should look with horror upon the idea of educating women, for the reason, so fully realised by the Spaniards, that it is easier to govern a nation of idiots than a nation of wise men. A stupid nation is a happy one ; if it does not know the joys of liberty, neither does it know anxiety and storm ; it lives as live the polyparies ; like them it can split itself up into two or three parts ; each part is always a complete nation, that goes on growing, and is ready to be governed by the first blind man carrying a shepherd's staff who comes along.

What produces this human marvel ?—ignorance : by ignorance alone is despotism maintained ; it needs shadowy depths and silence. Now, happiness in the home, as in politics, is a negative happiness. The affection of a nation for its king is perhaps less of an outrage on nature than the faithfulness of a wife to the husband whom she no longer loves. We are aware that with you at this moment love is standing with one foot on the window-ledge—all the more reason for you to put into practice the salutary severities by which M. de Metternich prolonged his *statu quo* ; but we advise you

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to apply them with even greater tact and urbanity than he did, for your wife is more voluptuous than an Italian and more wily than all the Germans put together.

Thus must we try to put off as long as ever we can the fatal moment in which your wife asks you for a book. It will be an easy matter for you. First of all you must pronounce the words 'blue-stocking'—very disdainfully; and, if she repeat her request, you must explain to her the ridicule that attaches to learned women in the eyes of their neighbours.

Then you must say to her over and over again that the nicest women, and the most witty, are to be found in Paris, where women never read anything;

That women resemble the high-born in the land, who, according to Mascarille, know everything without learning anything;

That a woman, either when dancing, or when playing, ought, without ever seeming to listen, to be able to pick up from the talk of clever men the ready-made phrases which, with fools in Paris, pass for wit;

That their final judgments on men and things are passed as it were from hand to hand, and that the peremptory little tone in which a woman criticises an author, pulls a book to pieces, or sneers at a picture, has more power than an order of the Court;

That women are beautiful mirrors, and reflect beautiful ideas;

That common sense is everything, and that a woman is educated by what she learns in the world far better than by that which she reads in books;

And finally, that in the long run, reading dims the lustre of the eyes, and so on, and so on.

To leave a woman free to read such books as the bent of her mind would lead her to choose—is to drop a spark in a gun-room! Nay, it is worse than that, it is to teach your wife how to do without you, to live in an imaginary world, a paradise! For what do women read? Works relating to the passions, Jean-Jacques'

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Confessions, novels, and all things that are likely powerfully to agitate their feelings. They want neither reason nor ripe fruit. Have you never thought of the phenomena begotten of this poetic reading?

Novels, and indeed all books, paint feelings and things in far brighter colours than those of nature. This kind of fascination arises more from a desire every author has to appear as a perfect master in the art of suggesting delicate and fine-spun ideas than from some effort of the mind. It is the destiny of man to purify all that he carries to that treasure-house, his mind. What figures, what statues, but are made more beautiful in the drawing? The mind of the reader aids this conspiracy against truth, either by the deep silence in which it revels, or by the fire of the imagination, or again, by the clearness in which the images are reflected by the imagination. Who is there who, in reading Jean-Jacques' *Confessions*, has not pictured Madame de Warens as prettier than she really was? One might almost say that the soul cherishes forms of which it has had glimpses in earlier days under fairer skies; it looks upon the creations of another soul as wings on which to soar into space; it makes the most delicate touch perfect in appropriating it to itself, and the most poetic expression calls up still purer images. To read is as it were to create a double. Are these mysteries of the transubstantiation of ideas the promptings of a calling higher than that which fate has chosen for us? Are they the traditions of an old lost life? What, indeed, could the thing itself have been if what remains to us affords us such delight? . . .

Again, in reading plays and novels, the woman, being a creature far more susceptible to loftier feelings than we are, must experience the most intoxicating ecstasies. She creates around her an ideal existence which makes everything else look pale; it is not long before she tries to realise this voluptuous life, and convey its magic into her actual life. Almost involuntarily

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she passes from the spirit to the letter, and from the soul to the senses.

And you are simple enough to think that a man like you, with such manners and sentiments as yours, who spend most of your time dressing and undressing in front of your wife, can successfully combat the sentiments of these books, and in the presence too of imaginary lovers, in whose toilet the fair reader sees neither spot nor blemish ! Poor fool ! Too late, alas, to her misery and your own, will your wife discover that the heroes of the poets are as rare as the Apollyons of holy scripture.

Many husbands find it difficult to keep their wives from reading, and there are even some who contend that reading has this advantage, that at least they know what their wives are doing when they are thus engaged.

You will see from the meditation that follows how quarrelsome a sedentary life makes a woman ; and besides, have you never come across those men to whom poetry is unknown, who succeed in petrifying their poor companion by reducing their lives as far as possible to mechanical routine ? Study the conversation of these great ones ; learn by heart the excellent reasons for which they condemn poetry and the pleasures of the imagination.

But if, in spite of all your efforts, your wife should persist in her desire to read . . . then you should place at her disposal all the books you possibly can—from her little boy's A, B, C, to *René*, a book more dangerous in her hands than even *Thérèse Philosophe*. You could create in her a thorough distaste for reading by giving her dull books ; you could reduce her to imbecility with *Marie Alacoque*, *La Brosse de Pénitence*, or with the songs in vogue in the time of Louis XV. ; but you will find in a later meditation an account of various ways of consuming your wife's time so as to leave her no time for reading. Look at the many resources which the education of women

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supplies for turning aside your wife's passing fancy for knowledge. Consider with what an admirable stupidity the girls of France have abandoned themselves to the consequences of their bringing up; we hand them over to nurses, to companions, to governesses, who have twenty lies of coquetry and false modesty to teach them for one true and noble idea. Girls are trained like slaves, and they become resigned to the idea that they have been brought into the world to imitate their grandmothers, to breed canaries, to make collections of plants, and to water little Bengal rose-trees, cover tapestry, or lay in a stock of collars. And again, if at ten a girl has more tact than a boy of twenty, still she is timid and gauche. She will be terrified at a spider, she will talk empty nothings, think only of furbelows, chatter about her dress and the fashions, and will not have the courage to be either a careful mother or a chaste wife. This is the line that has been taken with her: she has been shown how to paint roses and to embroider scarves well enough to earn fourpence a day. She has learnt French history in *Le Ragois*, chronology in the *Tables du Citoyen Chantreau*, and her youthful imagination has been let loose in geography, all with this chief aim in view—that nothing dangerous should be allowed to approach her heart. At the same time, her mother and her governesses are repeating day by day that the whole of a woman's knowledge is displayed in the manner in which she arranges that fig-leaf which our mother Eve wore. She hears nothing for fifteen years, as Diderot says, but: 'My daughter, your fig-leaf is not right;' 'My daughter, your fig-leaf looks well;'

My daughter, would it not be better thus?'

It is, then, necessary that you should keep your wife within the bounds of this fine and noble realm of knowledge. If by any chance she should want a library, let her read Florian, Malte-Brun, *Le Cabinet des Fées*, *Les Mille et une Nuits*, *Les Roses*, by Redouté, *Les Usages de la Chine*, *Les Pigeons*, by

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Madame Knip, the great work on Egypt, and so on. In short, you must follow the good advice of that princess who, on hearing of an insurrection that had been brought to a head by the dearness of bread, said, 'Why don't the people eat buns?'

One evening your wife may reproach you for being surly and taciturn; or she may say you are amiable, when you have perpetrated a pun;—but this should be but a very slight check to our system. And besides, what does it matter to you if the education of women in France be the greatest absurdity, and if your marital anti-educationalism puts a doll in your arms? Since you have not enough courage to undertake a nobler task, is it not better to drag your wife along the beaten track than to risk letting her climb the dangerous precipices of love? It is useless for her to be a mother, for you are not so anxious to have a Gracchus for your son, as to be 'pater quem nuptiæ demonstrant.' Now, to help you to become such, we ought to make this book an arsenal where every man, according to his own character and that of his wife, may choose the armour suitable for the fight against the awful spirit of evil which is ever ready to spring up in a wife's soul; and taking everything carefully into consideration, since the ignorant are the most bitter enemies of the education of women, this meditation should serve as a vade-mecum for the majority of husbands.

A woman who has had a man's education is probably the possessor of the most brilliant faculties, and faculties most fruitful in happiness both for herself and for her husband; but this woman is as rare as happiness itself. You must, if you do not possess such a wife, keep yours, in the name of the happiness of both of you, well within the region of the ideas in which she was born, for you must always remember that a moment of arrogance on her part may ruin you, by placing on the throne a slave who would be the first to abuse her power.

After all, in following the system laid down for him

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in this meditation, a 'superior' man must give his ideas to his wife in 'small change' if he would have her understand him, that is, if he has been such a fool as to marry a poor creature instead of a young girl whose heart and soul he has long put to the proof.

By this last remark we do not mean that we advise all 'superior' men to seek out 'superior' women; neither do we wish that any one should interpret our principles after the fashion of Madame de Staël, who tried so openly to get herself married to Napoleon. Their life together would have been very unhappy; and Josephine was a very different wife from that virago of the nineteenth century.

As a matter of fact, when we speak vauntingly of those rare maidens, who are so happily educated by chance, and so well-fashioned by nature, that their delicate souls are able to withstand the rude contact of the great soul of the being called man, we have in mind those rare and noble creatures of whom Goethe has given us an example in *Count Egmont*; we are thinking of those women who wish for no other glory than that of merely playing their part well; who adapt themselves with wonderful pliancy to the pleasures and wishes of those whom nature has given them for masters; who raise themselves day by day nearer to the lofty regions of men's minds and lower themselves to the simple task of amusing them like children; who understand the vagaries of these tormented souls, their least word, their slightest glance; who, happy in silence, happy in endless chatter, discover, in short, that the pleasures, the ideas, and the morals of a Byron need not necessarily be those of a hosier. But we must cease; we are being led too far away from our subject, which is marriage, not love.

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TWELFTH MEDITATION.

THE HYGIENE OF MARRIAGE.

THE aim of this meditation is to put before you a new method of defence by means of which you may utterly and completely subdue your wife's will. It is concerned with the question of the reaction to which morals are subjected by physical changes and by a wise undermining of robust health by means of a carefully thought-out system of diet.

This great philosophical question of conjugal hygiene will doubtless prove a pleasant subject to all the gouty, sickly, and consumptive, and to those legions of old fogies whose impotency has been described in the article on the fore-ordained; but it will chiefly interest husbands who are bold enough to enter upon the paths of a machiavelism worthy of that great French king who tried to establish the happiness of the nation at the expense of a few feudal heads.

We are following the same idea here. It is always a matter of the amputation or the weakening of certain members for the greater happiness of the whole.

Do you seriously think that a bachelor who has submitted to the diet of 'hanea,' cucumbers, and purslane, and the application of leeches to his ears which Sterne recommends, will be in a fit condition to ruin your wife's honour? Imagine what would have happened if a talented diplomatist could have succeeded in putting a permanent linseed poultice round Napoleon's head, or in administering an enema to him every morning. Do you think that Napoleon, Napoleon the Great, would then have conquered Italy? Whether Napoleon was a prey to the horrors of dysuria during the Russian campaign or not . . . is one of those problems of which the solution has weighed heavily upon the whole

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world. Is it not a fact that cooling medicines, douches, baths, and so on, produce great changes in the more or less acute affections of the brain? In the midst of the heat of July, when your pores are slowly filtering, and restoring to the devouring atmosphere the iced lemonades that you have been gulping down, have you ever been conscious of that shining courage, that vigorous thought, that fulness of energy that had made existence easy and light for you a few months before?

Iron that is embedded, no matter how deep, in the hardest stone, will always rise and so disturb the most enduring monument, under the secret influence of the slow and invisible change produced in it by the varying temperature of the atmosphere. Let us then recognise it as a fact that if atmospheric influences affect man, so much the more will man, in his turn, influence the imagination of his fellows, in proportion to the vigour and power with which he exerts his will and surrounds himself, as it were, with an atmosphere of his own.

Herein lies the secret of the actor's genius, of the genius of poetry and fanaticism, for one is the eloquence of language, and the other the eloquence of action; herein lies the first principle of a science yet in its infancy.

This will-power, so powerful between man and man, this nervous fluid force, so infinitely mobile and ductile, is itself subject to the changing state of man's organization, and the fragile organism is subject to variations from many causes.

At this point our metaphysical remarks shall cease, and we will return to the analysis of those circumstances that develop man's will-power on the lines of its strength or its weakness.

Now you must not for one moment think that our purpose is to advise you to put poultices on your wife's honour, to shut her up in a vapour-bath, or seal her like a letter. No! We shall not even attempt to unfold the 'magnetic' system; from it you might indeed

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gain power enough to enable you to cause your will to triumph in your wife's soul ; but the husband does not exist who would accept the joys of everlasting love at the price of such a perpetual drain on the animal forces as its adoption would entail ; but we will endeavour to set before you a formidable system of hygiene, by means of which you may extinguish the fire when it has caught the chimney.

In the habits and customs of the fops of Paris, and of the Departments of France (the fops, by the way, form a very important class with honest women) we shall find plenty to help us in attaining our end, without searching in the arsenal of the therapeutics of fecundity, and without examining the thousand and one discoveries that are worthy only of a sorcerer. We will even leave the hanea to Cælian and the purslane and cucumber to Sterne, men who display their antiphlogistic tendencies somewhat too plainly.

You may allow your wife to lie stretched for days together in an easy arm-chair—half buried in a bath of eider-down and feathers.

You may countenance, so far as your conscience will allow you, the propensity women have only to breathe the heavy-laden air of a room that is seldom thrown open, and where daylight with difficulty pierces their voluptuous, diaphanous muslin hangings.

You may obtain quite wonderful results from this system, provided you have been able previously to put up with the excesses of her time of exaltation ; indeed, if you are strong enough to stand that short-lived period of excitement, you will soon be rewarded by seeing her unnatural strength disappear. Generally speaking, women like to live fast, but after the storms in their feelings come the calms that are so reassuring to the husband's happiness.

Has not Jean-Jacques, in his charming Julie, proved to your wife that she will gain an infinite charm by being careful not to abuse her delicate stomach and

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spoil her heavenly mouth, by making chyle from disgusting pieces of beef and enormous shoulders of mutton? Do those interesting vegetables, which are always so fresh and so sweet, count for nothing in the eyes of those whose lives are pure and stainless?—the bright fruits, the coffee, the scented chocolate, the oranges, the golden apples of Atalanta, the dates of Arabia, the Brussels rusks; all that healthy and pleasant food which is so satisfying, and which at the same time endows a woman with a certain mysterious charm peculiar to her sex. She becomes famous in her set for her diet, as one might become famous for always being well dressed, for having done a noble deed, or having said a witty thing. Pythagoras should be her passion, just as he would be, very likely, if he were a dog or a monkey.

You must never make the mistake of those men who, to give themselves an appearance of strong-mindedness, combat the feminine belief that to eat little preserves the figure. That women who are dieted do not get fat is certain; you will never get away from that fact.

You should next praise the art by which women renowned for their beauty have preserved it by bathing several times a day in milk, or by bathing in water mixed with substances that soften the skin, while weakening the nervous system.

Above all recommend her, for the sake of that health of hers which you have so much at heart, to refrain from washing in cold water; hot or warm water should always be the fundamental ingredient of all her washing operations.

Broussais should be your idol. If your wife is ever so slightly indisposed, apply leeches upon the smallest pretext; do not hesitate to apply a dozen or so from time to time yourself, in order that the celebrated doctor's methods may be an institution in your home. Your position as husband makes it incumbent on you to be for ever finding that your wife is looking too 'red'; you must even try sometimes to let blood from the

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head, in order that from time to time you may find it necessary to introduce to the house a whole troop of leeches.

Your wife may drink water that is slightly coloured with Burgundy ; but it must be Burgundy without tonic properties ; all other wine is bad.

Never let her drink plain water—if she does you are lost.

Impetuous liquid ! see how women yield to your power when once you press upon the flood-gates of their brain ! Curiosity will make its appearance, swimming down the stream and signing to her companions to follow. Imagination sits dreamily on the water's edge. She follows the stream with her eyes, and changes the wisps of straw and the rushes into foremast and bowsprit. No sooner is the metamorphosis complete, than Desire, holding up her dress as high as her knees, comes upon the scene, sees both the masts, and seizes upon them. O you drinkers of water, is it by the aid of this delicious spring that you have so often turned the world and turned it again to the dictates of your pleasure, changing sometimes even the form and aspect of nature ?

If by this system of inaction, coupled with the food system, you do not obtain satisfactory results, you must cast yourself heart and soul into yet another system which we will now set before you.

Man possesses a given amount of energy. The amount in one man is to the amount in one woman either as 1 is to 3, or as 1 is to 5 ; in all cases the amount has a limit which cannot be exceeded. The amount of energy, or of will-power possessed by each one of us reveals itself like sound : it is now weak, now strong ; it varies with the octaves it covers. This force is a unique force, and whether it expends itself in desires, in passions, in labours of the mind, or in bodily works, it hastens at its master's call. A boxer expends it in punches ; a baker in kneading his bread ; a poet in moments of ecstasy ; a dancer

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lets it pass into his feet ; in fact, every one distributes it according to his fancy, and may I see the minotaur seated quietly on my bed if you do not know as well as I do where it spends itself most. Most men consume this fine sum of energy and will-power presented to them by nature in inevitable work, or in the anguish of fatal passions ; but our honest women are one and all at the mercy of the caprices of and the strife set up by this force which, in their case, does not know how to expend itself. If your wife's energy has not succumbed to the diet régime, you must try to find an occupation for her which shall utterly consume the force by which you are disturbed. There are a thousand and one ways of tiring out your wife with the scourge of constant work, without actually putting her nose to the grindstone.

In leaving to your discretion the ways of carrying out this system (for they vary with circumstances) we may mention dancing as one of the finest 'gulfs' for swallowing up love and intrigue. As this matter has been treated in a masterly fashion by a contemporary, we will let him speak.

'The poor victim whom an enchanted circle of beholders admires pays dearly for her triumph. What fruit can possibly come of efforts so ill-suited to the weaker sex? The muscles are over-fatigued, and waste away almost to nothing. The senses, that are meant to nourish the fire of the passions and the work of the brain, are turned from their proper course. The absence of healthy appetites, the longing for rest, the exclusive choice of food of a substantial kind, all point to an impoverished nature, that is given up to recruiting its strength rather than to enjoyment. A frequenter of green-rooms said to me once : "He who has lived with dancers has lived on mutton, for they are so constantly in a state of exhaustion that they cannot do without vigorous nourishment." Believe me, the love that the dancing-girl inspires is a snare : you meet her

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when she is ill-humoured, in the spring-time of life, which has been forced, when all the earth is still cold and dreary, and the senses have neither warmth nor fire. Calabrian doctors prescribe dancing as a cure for the hysteria common among the women of their country, and the Arabs use practically the same prescription for their thoroughbred mares, that are made barren by the too luxurious climate. "As stupid as a dancer" is a proverb of the stage. In fact, the wisest heads of Europe are convinced that all dancing has an eminently cooling effect.

'In proof of all this, it is necessary to add one or two more remarks. The life of shepherds led to profligacy. The morals of weavers were terribly decried in Greece. The Italians have a proverb on the lasciviousness of cripples. The Spaniards, in whose veins there was not so great a proportion of African incontinency, showed the secret of their desires in the following maxim, which is a by-word with them: "*Muger y gallina pierna quebrantada*" ("It is good when women or fowls have broken legs"). How deeply versed the Orientals were in the art of voluptuousness is completely revealed in that regulation of Caliph Hakim, founder of the Druses, by which he forbade, on pain of death, the making of shoes for women in his country. It would seem that all over the world the tempests of the heart wait until the legs are in repose before they burst upon us!'

How admirable a plan it would be, then, to make a woman dance, and feed her on white meat only!

You must not think that these remarks, which are as true as they are pithy, contradict our preceding remarks; by attention to the latter as well as to the former you will succeed in bringing a woman to that state of weakness which you long for, that pledge of rest and peace. By the latter you leave the door open for the enemy to make his escape; by the former you kill him.

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At this point we seem to hear the timid and the narrow-minded attacking our hygiene in the name of morality or even decency.

Is not woman endowed with a soul ? Has she not sensations just as we have ? By what right, in defiance of her griefs, her aspirations, her needs, is she to be worked upon like the raw metal out of which the artificer makes an extinguisher or a torch ? Is it because the poor creatures are already weak and unhappy that brutal man arrogates to himself the right to torture them just for the sake of carrying out certain ideas of his which may or may not be justifiable ? And if by your weakening system which attenuates, enfeebles, and moulds the fibres, you should cause awful and cruel diseases ; if you should bring a woman who is dear to you to the grave ; if, if, and so on.

Here is our answer.

Have you ever counted how many different shapes Harlequin and Pierrot give to their little white hat ? They turn it about so cleverly that it becomes in succession a spinning-top, a boat, a tumbler, a half-moon, a cap, a basket, a fish, a whip, a dagger, a baby, a man's head, and many other things.

Now this is an exact image of the despotism with which you should mould and re-mould your wife.

Woman is a possession acquired by contract ; she is personal property, and the possession of her is as good as a security—indeed, properly speaking, woman is only man's annexe ; therefore, cut, pare, chip as you will, she is yours anyhow. Do not trouble yourself in any way about her murmurings, her cries, her pains ; nature has made her for your use, made her to bear all : the children, the worries, the blows, and the sorrows of man.

But do not accuse us of harshness. In the codes of all the so-called civilised nations, man has written the laws which rule the destiny of woman beneath this bloody inscription : *Væ victis!* Woe to the vanquished!

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Finally, we would ask you to ponder over the remark that we are about to make ; it is, perhaps, the most convincing of any we have yet ventured to make :—if it is not you, the husband, who break under the scourge of your will this tender, charming reed, it will be some wanton, despotic bachelor, whose yoke will be far more awful to bear ; and besides your wife will have two scourges to bear instead of one. All things considered, humanity will thus lead you to follow out our hygienic principles.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

PERSONAL MEANS.

THE preceding meditations have been devoted to unfolding general schemes of conduct, rather than to presenting us with means to repel force by force. They have dealt with internal, not external medicine.

Now here are the personal means which nature has put into your hands for your defence ; for Providence has forgotten no one : if she has given to the sepia (a fish of the Adriatic) that black colour which produces a cloud in the heart of which it manages to slip away from its pursuer, you may well believe that she has not left the husband without a weapon : the time has come for you to draw your sword.

When you marry you must make it a condition that your wife shall suckle her children ; so that, by loading her with the cares of both child-bearing and suckling, you may avert the danger for a year or two. A woman who is engaged in bringing a little boy into the world and feeding him has really no time to think about a lover ; to say nothing of the fact that before and after her confinement she is not in a fit state to be seen in society. Indeed, how could the most immodest of the distinguished women whom we are here considering dare

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to let herself be seen in such circumstances and make a public exhibition of the hidden fruit that she carries within her? O Lord Byron, thou who didst not wish to see a woman eat!

Six months after her lying-in, if the child has been properly nourished, a woman begins to enjoy her restored health and freedom again.

Even if your wife has refused to suckle her first child, you should have too much spirit to give in on that account; you must try to make her wish to feed the next. You should read Jean-Jacques' *Emile* to her, stir her imagination with a recital of the duties of a mother, exalt her sense of morality, and so on; in fact, either you are a fool or a sensible man; in the first case, you are practically certain to be minotaurised; in the second case—a word to the wise is enough.

This first means of defence is in reality a personal one. It will open out a fine field, in which you may make use of others.

Since the time when Alcibiades cut off the ears and tail of his dog to oblige Pericles, who had on hand a kind of Spanish war in which the Athenians were then engaged, there has not been a single minister who has not tried to cut off the ears of some dog or other.

Indeed, in medicine, when an inflammation sets in in some vital part, a slight counter-revolution is effected on another part, by cauteries, scarifications, acupunctures, and so on.

Another way then is to cauterise your wife, or thrust into her brain a needle which will prick her, and thus make a diversion in your favour.

A clever man once made his honeymoon last nearly four years; the moon waned at length, and he saw the fatal crescent appearing. His wife was in exactly the same condition as that which we have described at the end of the First Part. She was, it is true, enamoured of an object unworthy enough, an ugly little man; but then—he was not her husband. The

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latter saved himself by cutting off the ' dog's tail,' and by so doing he renewed the lease of his precarious happiness for several years. His wife's behaviour was so exquisitely tactful, that he would have found it very difficult to forbid her intercourse with the lover for whom she had discovered an affinity for no better reason than that of her being very distantly related to him. The danger grew more imminent every day. The smell of the minotaur pervaded the air. One evening the husband appeared to be overcome by a heartfelt and terrible grief. His wife had already come to be more friendly towards him than she had been even during the honeymoon ; and she accompanied her friendliness with a perfect volley of questions, to which his only answer was gloomy silence. The questions came twice as fast ; he let fall confidential hints which pointed to a great misfortune. He applied a Japanese cautery to his wife, that burnt like an auto-da-fé of the year 1600 ! She had previously tried by a thousand and one manœuvres to find out whether her husband's worry was caused by this lover in embryo, this first intrigue in which she had made use of so many little ruses. From one thing she imagined another. . . . The question of the lover was shelved. After all, was it not necessary that she should discover her husband's secret ? One evening he came home filled with a desire to confide his troubles to his dear friend, and announced that he had lost all his fortune. They would have to give up the carriage, the box at the Bouffes, balls, parties, Paris itself ; perhaps if they hid themselves in the country for a year or two, they might recover it ! Addressing himself to his wife's imagination, as well as to her heart, he pitied her for having thrown in her lot with that of a man who, it was true, loved her, but who was practically penniless ; he tore his hair, and she, to reassure him, was obliged to praise her good qualities and her honourable motives ; then, in the first delirium of this conjugal fever, he took her to his estate in the country. No sooner there, than—new

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scarifications, sinapisms on sinapisms took place—and new ‘dog-tails’ were cut off: he had a Gothic wing built to the castle; madame had the park turned up ten times over, in the making of streams, lakes, undulating sweeps, and the like; nor did the husband, in the midst of all this work, forget his own: curious and interesting books were brought to her, delicate attentions bestowed. You will see that it never once entered his head to tell his wife of the ruse; and if his fortunes were retrieved, it was on account of the construction of a new wing, and the enormous sums spent on making streams; as he pointed out to her, the lake made a waterfall, by means of which mills could be worked, and so on.

There you have a thoroughly well thought-out conjugal cautery, for the husband did not forget either to beget children, or to invite neighbours—bores, fools, and old people;—and if they spent the winter in Paris, he cast his wife into such a whirlpool of balls and excursions that she had not a minute to give to lovers; they are the inevitable fruit of an idle life.

There were journeyings to Italy, Switzerland, Greece, sudden illnesses only to be cured by a course of waters (and the most distant waters too!)—all very good cauteries. In short, an intelligent man ought to be able to think a thousand ‘cauteries’ out of one suggestion.

Let us proceed in our investigation of personal means.

We would observe that our reasoning is based on an hypothesis which is such that if it does not hold in your case you may as well put the book down. It is this: that your honeymoon has lasted a respectable time, and that the woman whom you have made your wife was at the time of her marriage a maid; if she was not, she has, in accordance with the French custom, only married you for ‘indiscreet’ reasons.

The moment the struggle between virtue and indiscretion begins, the whole question becomes a matter of the everlasting comparisons which your

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wife makes—involuntarily, it is true—between you and her lover.

There still remains one means of defence for you, and that an entirely personal one, and although it is seldom employed by husbands, it is one that wise men do not hesitate to make use of.

It consists in getting the better of the lover, without letting your wife suspect your intentions. One night as she is putting on her curl-papers, you must induce her to say to herself irritably: ‘Why, even my husband is preferable!’

To succeed in this, you must make use of the immense advantage which you have over the lover in that you know your wife’s character, and how to wound her; and with all the tact of a diplomatist you must cause this lover to be guilty of awkward blunders, making it his own fault if he fails to please—and all without his having any idea of it.

At first, as is usually the case, he will seek your friendship, and you will find that you have friends in common; therefore, either through these friends, or by making artful and treacherous insinuations, you can betray him on an essential point; and if only you have a little skill, you will live to see your wife dismiss her lover, and neither she nor he be able to guess why she does so. You have composed within the precincts of your household, a five-act comedy, in which you play the brilliant part of Figaro, or of Almaviva, for your own advantage; and for a few months you will amuse yourself, all the more that your self-esteem, your vanity, and your interest, are called into play.

I had the good fortune in my youth to strike the fancy of an old *émigré*, who taught me those rudiments of knowledge which young men generally acquire from women. This friend, whose memory will ever be dear to me, taught me by his own example how to invent those diplomatic stratagems which require as much tact as personal charm.

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The Comte de Nocé returned from Coblentz at the moment when it was dangerous for aristocrats to remain in France. Never before did a man show such courage and such goodness, such subtlety and such open-heartedness. Though some sixty years old, he had lately married a young girl of five-and-twenty, having been induced to commit this act of folly by feelings of charity: he freed the poor girl from the tyranny of a wayward mother. The kind old man had said to Mademoiselle de Pontivy, 'Will you be my widow?' but his was a too tender nature—he became more attached to his wife than a wise man ever should. As in his early days he had been 'broken in' by some of the most witty women of the Court of Louis XV., he did not despair of keeping his Countess free from any such encumbrance as a lover. Never have I seen a man put into practice so well the advice I am now trying to give husbands! What charms could he not cast over life by his gentleness and wit! It was only after his death that his wife learnt from me that he suffered from gout. His life distilled urbanity as his eyes breathed love. He had prudently withdrawn to the heart of a valley near a wood, and only heaven knows of the walks he used to take there with his wife! His lucky star had willed that Mademoiselle de Pontivy should have an excellent heart, and should possess to a high degree that exquisite delicacy, that sensitive modesty, which would, I believe, render the ugliest women in the world beautiful. Suddenly and unexpectedly, one of his nephews, a fine young soldier who had escaped the disasters of Moscow, returned, and came to visit his uncle, as much because he wished to know how far he had cause to fear the advent of a cousin as to make war on his aunt. His black hair, his moustache, the conceited prattle of a staff-officer, a certain *disinvoltura* as elegant as it was light, and bright eyes, all made a strong contrast between him and his uncle. I arrived at the very moment when the young Countess was showing her relative how to play

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backgammon. There is a proverb to the effect that women only learn this game from their lovers, and *vice versa*. Moreover, during the game, Monsieur de Nocé had, on that very morning, caught the two young people exchanging one of those confused looks that bear the stamp of an innocence in which fear is mingled with desire. In the evening he proposed a shooting expedition which we readily agreed to. Never had I seen him so cheerful and so gay as he seemed next morning, in spite of the symptoms that warned him that he would soon be suffering from another attack of gout. The devil himself could not have enlivened a party with gayer nonsense. He had been an old grey musketeer, and known Sophie Arnoult—which accounts for everything. The talk between the three of us was soon the merriest possible.

‘By Jove! I never thought my uncle was such a fine fellow!’ said the nephew to me.

We called a halt, and when we were seated on the grass in one of the greenest glades in the forest, the Count led us on to a discourse upon women more cleverly than even Brantôme and L’Aloysia could have done.

‘You are happy enough under this government! Women have morals!’ (To appreciate the old man’s exclamation properly, you need to have heard the horrors that the Captain had just been recounting.) ‘And,’ continued the Count, ‘it is one of the benefits we have gained from the Revolution. The present system imparts charm and mystery to the passions. In days gone by the women were too easy-going; you would hardly believe what wit and verve were needed to arouse their jaded passions: we had to be always on the alert. But at the same time, a man could become famous for some neatly turned obscenity, or for a successful piece of insolence. It is such behaviour that women like; and it is always a sure way of succeeding with them. . . .’

These words were spoken very bitterly. He ceased

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and began to play with the cock of his gun, as if to hide some strong feeling.

‘But, after all,’ said he, ‘my time is over! What is wanted is a youthful imagination—and a young body too. . . . Why did I marry? The most insidious thing about girls brought up by mothers who have lived through a brilliant age of gallantry is that they make a parade of candour, and even of prudery. . . . The sweetest honey seems to offend their delicate lips, whereas those who really know them are well aware that they would eat salt pills if they thought they would.’

He rose, took hold of his gun, and in his rage dashed it to the ground, burying it in the wet grass almost up to the butt.

‘My dear aunt seems to like an idle tale,’ whispered the officer.

‘Or an issue that does not drag,’ I added.

The nephew tightened his cravat, adjusted his collar, and leaped up like a goat. We returned at about two o’clock. The Count kept me by his side until dinner-time, on the pretext of looking at some medals of which he had spoken to me on the way back. The dinner was a gloomy one. The Countess treated her nephew with distant politeness. When we retired to the drawing-room the Count said to his wife:

‘Are you going to play backgammon? We will leave you.’

The young Countess made no reply. She was staring at the fire and did not seem to have heard him. The husband went a few steps towards the door, making a sign for me to follow him. At the sound of his tread his wife turned her head quickly.

‘Why leave us?’ she said. ‘You have all to-morrow to show your friend the medals.’

The Count stayed. Paying no attention to the hardly perceptible embarrassment to which his nephew’s habitual military ease of manner had given place, he displayed the inexpressible charm of his conversation

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throughout the whole of the evening. Never had I seen him so brilliant and so affectionate. We talked a great deal about women. Our host's pleasantries were distinguished by the most exquisite delicacy. For my part I could not see the whiteness of the hair on his old head, for he glowed with that youthfulness of heart and mind which smooths away wrinkles and melts as it were the winter snow. On the next day the nephew left. Even after the death of Monsieur de Nocé, when trying to profit by the intimacy of those familiar talks during which women are not sometimes off their guard, I never discovered what was the nature of the impertinence that the Viscount had committed. It must have been of a serious nature, for from that time Madame de Nocé never wished to see her nephew again, and cannot, even now, hear his name without a slight raising of the eyebrows. I did not at once divine the object of the Count's shooting expedition ; but later on I found he had played a deep game.

Yet if you succeed, as Monsieur de Nocé did, in gaining a great victory, do not, all the same, forget to put the 'cautery' system into practice ; and do not imagine that one can with impunity repeat such *tours-de-force*. If you did squander your talents in that way, it would end in your being lowered in your wife's eyes ; for she would look (and rightly too) for twice as much as you could give, and there would soon come a time when you would be at the end of your powers. The human soul is subject in its desires to a kind of arithmetical progression, of which the first term and the last are alike unknown. Just as the opium-eater has always to double his dose to get the same result as before, so the soul, as exacting as it is weak, would have its feelings, its ideas, and its actions increase in a definite ratio. Whence the necessity for the skilful distribution of the interest in a play, and for graduating the cure in medicine. If you do not adopt this method, your intrepid conduct will be subjected to

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many trials, and the issue will always be dependent on the extent of your resources.

Have you credit? powerful friends? do you hold an important post? If so, there are means at your disposal that will tear the evil up by the root. Could you not remove your wife's lover (if he happened to be a soldier) by promoting him to another district? Then of course you would have to intercept letters; we will tell you how to do this later on; and besides, '*Sublata causa, tollitur effectus*'—a phrase which may be freely translated by 'There is no effect without a cause;' or 'No pay, no paternoster.'

You may feel that your wife could easily choose another lover; but, after these preliminaries, you can always have a cautery ready, for the purpose of gaining time, and then proceed to circumvent the intrigue by some new ruse.

Try to combine the cautery system with deceptions in the manner of the mimic, Carlin—the immortal Carlin of the *Comédie Italienne*, who could hold a theatre-full of people spellbound, and keep them in good humour for hours together simply by the words, 'The king said to the queen'—'The queen said to the king,' uttered in a thousand and one different tones, and varied by the noble art of pantomime. Copy Carlin. Find a way of leaving your wife 'in perpetual check,' so that you may save yourself from being mated. In the art of making promises you should take a leaf from the book of a government minister. Get to know exactly the right time for setting up a Punch-and-Judy show that a child will instinctively run after without noticing which way he is going. We are all children; and women with their curiosity are well enough disposed towards wasting time in the pursuit of a defunct hobgoblin. Is not imagination by your side to aid you,—imagination, that brilliant flame that is extinguished all too soon!

Finally, you should study the art of appearing to

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be always at your wife's side without actually being there—an art that makes for happiness; you must learn how to seize the moments in which you are most likely to make a good impression on her mind, without her ever becoming bored by you and your superiority, or even by her own happiness. If her mind has not been entirely destroyed by your having kept her in a state of ignorance, you will find, I can assure you, that it is still possible for you to feel drawn to one another from time to time.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE HOUSE.

THE foregoing ways and means have been to a certain extent moral. They have some claim to nobility—they have to do, as it were, with the soul, and they have nothing repugnant about them; but now we are going to obtain help from precautions in the manner of Bartholo. Never waver. There is a courage that is proper to the husband, just as there is the courage of the soldier or the citizen or the National Guard.

When a little girl has bought a parrot, what is her first care? Is it not to shut it up in a fine cage which it cannot leave without her permission?

From such a child you may learn your own duty.

Your house and its rooms must be so arranged as to leave your wife as few opportunities as possible for delivering you, if she is disposed to do so, into the hands of the minotaur; for half the misery in the world comes from the deplorable encouragement that the wife is accustomed to derive from her own rooms.

Remember first of all to have a single man for *concierge*, and one who is thoroughly attached to your person. Such a treasure is easy to find: who cannot unearth from somewhere or other, either a foster-father or an ancient serving-man who used to jump you on his knees?

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A hatred such as Atreus felt for Thyestes ought to exist between your wife and the Nestor who guards your door. That door is the alpha and omega of an intrigue;—cannot all the intrigues in the world be reduced to this : coming in and going out?

Your house will be of no assistance to you whatever, unless it stands alone in its own grounds, court-yard in front and garden in the rear.

First of all you must do away with all recesses in the reception rooms. A cupboard, even if it only has room for half a dozen pots of jam, should be enclosed with walls. Remember that you are making preparations for war, and that the first thought of a general is to cut off the enemy's supplies. The walls should be plain, affording lines such as the eye can easily take in at a glance and such as will immediately expose any strange element that may have crept in. Look at the pedestals of antique statues and you will find that the beauty of Greek and Roman apartments lay chiefly in the purity of their lines, the flatness of the walls and the scarcity of furniture. The Greeks would have smiled pityingly at one of our enormous wardrobes.

You must above all bring all your energies into play when applying this magnificent system of defence to the arrangement of your wife's private room; never let her drape her bed in such a way that she is able to walk round it lost in a labyrinth of curtains; ruthlessly cut her off from the other rooms by giving her one at the end of the reception rooms. Let it be one that can only be approached by way of the drawing-rooms, so that you can easily see who goes in and who comes out.

You will no doubt have learnt from the *Mariage de Figaro* that you had better give your wife a room at a great height from the ground;—all bachelors are Chérubins.

No doubt you are well enough off for your wife to have a dressing-room, a bath-room, and a room for her

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maid; in that case, you must bear ' Suzanne ' in mind and never make the mistake of letting the maid's little room be below that of Madame; let it always be above, and do not shrink from disfiguring your house by blocking out the windows wherever you think fit.

If you find that by some evil chance this dangerous room communicates with your wife's by a private staircase, you must have a serious consultation with your architect; let him exercise his genius to the utmost in giving to this sinister quarter of the house an air of innocence by means of a primitive staircase with a trap-door at the end; let him, we beg of you, see that there are no treacherous little recesses on this staircase, that the stairs are steep and narrow, and that it does not contain any such corner as that which Faublas and Justine found so charming and so convenient when they were waiting for the Marquis de B—— to go out. Nowadays architects build staircases which are preferable to sofas! Do you, rather, revive the winding staircase of our virtuous forefathers.

With regard to the fireplaces in Madame's room, you should have an iron grating placed at a height of five feet above the chimney-pots,—it must be refixed every time the chimneys are swept. If your wife thinks that this is a ridiculous precaution, you must remind her of the many murders that have been committed, by the murderer gaining access by the chimney—nearly all women are afraid of burglars.

The bed is of crucial importance and you should plan it very carefully. Every detail is of vital significance. A fairly long experience leads me to advise that this piece of furniture should be of a design original enough for it to be always regarded with pleasure notwithstanding the various styles which follow so quickly on one another, each in its turn destroying an earlier creation of the decorator's genius; for it is essential that your wife should not be able to alter this scene of conjugal felicity whenever she thinks she will. The

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bottom of the bed should be strong and massive, without that treacherous space between it and the floor that beds so often have. Remember too that Byron makes his Julia hide Don Juan under her pillow. But it would be absurd to treat so delicate a subject lightly.

LXII. In marriage the bed is everything.

The time has now come for us to give all our attention to this wonderful creation of the human mind. It is an invention of which we ought to think far more highly than we do of our ships, our firearms, our sabres, our four-wheeled cabs, our high and low pressure steam-engines, our condensing and our expansion engines;—even more highly than of our barrels of beer and our bottles of wine. And besides, a moment's thought will tell us that the bed has in it something of all these; but when we remember that it is our second father, and that half of our existence, its most peaceful and most agitated portion, is passed under its gracious protection, words in which worthily to sing its praises fail us. (See the Seventeenth Meditation, on the Theory of the Bed.)

When the *war*, of which we shall speak in Part III., has broken out between you and your lady, you will have to be ingenious enough to find pretexts for rummaging in her drawers and her writing-desk; for if your wife presume to hide away a statue, it is to your interest to know where she has concealed it. If her room is properly constructed on some definite plan, you will be able to see at a glance if it contains two silk-covered books more than usual. If you allow her to have a single cupboard in it, you are lost! Encourage your wife, during the honeymoon, to be exceedingly neat as to her apartment; and see that nothing is left lying about untidily. If you do not teach her very careful habits, and if the same things are not always to be found in the same places, she will leave everything in such disorder that you will not be able to see if there are the two silk-covered books more or less already referred to

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The curtains must always be of some transparent material, and in the evening you should make it a habit to stroll about, so that your wife may never be surprised to see you go as far as the window. The windows of your house should be so built that the sill is not sufficiently large for a bag of flour to rest on it.

When once your wife's room has been arranged on this principle, you can feel secure, though there were niches enough in the house to lodge every saint in paradise. Every evening, with the help of your friend the concierge, you should see that the number of people who have gone in tallies with the number who have come out ; and to make assurance doubly sure, by all means teach him to keep a visitors' book by double-entry.

If you have a garden, you must also have a passion for dogs. You will keep the minotaur in awe of you, as long as you have one of those incorruptible guardians for ever prowling under your windows, especially if you train your four-footed friend never to take anything solid from any one but the concierge, and so save him from being poisoned by some unscrupulous bachelor.

You can take all these precautions quite naturally and without arousing any suspicions. If on his marriage a man has omitted to furnish his house on these prudent lines, he ought either to sell it at once and buy another, or pretend that repairs are needed, and practically rebuild it.

Ruthlessly banish from your rooms all couches, ottomans, sofas made to hold two, settees, &c. In the first place, furniture of this kind nowadays adorns the houses of grocers ; one sees it everywhere, even in a hairdresser's establishment ; and besides, it is essentially of a treacherous nature. I can never look at it without horror, for I always seem to see the devil standing by, with his horns and cloven-foot.

Nothing is so dangerous as a chair, and it is most unfortunate that one cannot shut one's womankind up between four perfectly bare walls ! . . . What hus-

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE HOUSE

band is not reminded of the advice given by Crebillon fils in 'The Sofa,' when he seats himself on a chair standing by itself? But, luckily, we have arranged your rooms on a plan in which the occurrence of anything fatal is foreseen and prevented; provided, that is, that you do not yourself contribute to a catastrophe by your own negligence.

One fault that you should contract (and never correct yourself of) is a kind of aimless curiosity which causes you to be for ever examining all the boxes you come across, and turning work-baskets upside down. You should go about it pleasantly and in an original way, and if only you arouse her sense of fun you can get her to pardon you every time.

You should always display the most profound astonishment at the sight of any new piece of furniture introduced into your well-arranged room. You must immediately ask what is the use of it; and then rack your brains to find out whether your wife has not some hidden reason for putting it in the room, and whether she does not mean to use it as a hiding-place for some naughtiness or other.

Nor is this all. If you are wise you will have realised that your pretty parrakeet will only stay in her cage so long as she thinks it a fine cage. It should bear evidence of tastefulness in its smallest details—the whole thing should present a simple and pleasing picture. You should have the hangings and curtains changed frequently. That the decorations should always be fresh and new is too essential a matter for you to risk any economy over it. Their freshness is like the chickweed which a child carefully puts into his bird's cage every morning, to remind the bird of the green fields. A room such as we have been describing is, therefore, the husband's *ultima ratio*: a woman cannot possibly complain when she is treated so lavishly.

A husband who is condemned to live in a furnished flat is in the most fearful plight of all.

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How great is the influence over his fate, either for good or evil, that is exerted by the porter of such an establishment!

Is not the house flanked by two others? It is true that by arranging for all his wife's rooms to be on one side of the house he can halve the danger; but he will still be compelled to learn by heart and to be for ever thinking over, the ages, the circumstances, the incomes, the characters, and the habits of the occupants of the adjacent houses, and even to become acquainted with their friends and relations.

A wise husband will never live on the ground-floor.

All husbands are at liberty to adopt, with regard to their houses, the same precautions that we have recommended to hotel-proprietors, and the former will have this advantage over the latter, namely: that a small establishment is much more easily looked after than a large one.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE CUSTOM-HOUSE.

‘CERTAINLY not, madam, most certainly not!’

‘It would be so very unseemly, sir’

‘Do you mean to say, madam, that you think we are asking that the people who cross your threshold or stealthily leave the house should be searched, as at a toll-house, for the purpose of finding out whether they are bringing you some contraband trinket? Why, it would hardly be decent! Rest assured, madam, that our proposal is in no way so odious, and that it does not in any way partake of the nature of “treasury proceedings.”’

Sir, of all the duties laid down in this Second Part, those of a conjugal Custom-house officer perhaps require the greatest amount of tact, *finesse*, and that kind of knowledge which is acquired before marriage, and which we may call *a priori* knowledge.

THE CUSTOM-HOUSE

To know how to inspect 'excisable articles,' a husband must have made a profound study of Lavater's book, and must be steeped in all its principles; he must have accustomed his eye and his ear to judge and to seize with extraordinary quickness upon the smallest physical signs by which human beings betray their inmost feelings.

La Physiognomie of Lavater has given rise to a new science. Indeed, it has taken a place among the most important achievements of the human mind. When the book first came out it was met with laughter and suspicion, but since then the celebrated Dr. Gall has appeared, and he, by his fine study on the cranium, has completed the theories of the Swiss, and added the weight of his authority to Lavater's delicate and luminous observations. Men of intellect, diplomatists, women, and all fervent disciples of these two famous men, have often had occasion to remark other signs that give evidence of the thoughts that lie hidden in the brain. A man's personal habits, his writing, the sound of his voice, his manners, have many a time enabled the woman who loves, the diplomatist who is deceiving, the clever administrator, or the sovereign, to discern at a glance the love, the treason, or the merit that had up to then been hidden. The man whose brain is always at work is like a poor glow-worm that, without knowing it, emits light at every pore. He moves in a brilliant sphere, and every movement scatters the shining light and is shown up by long lines of bright fire.

Such are the elements of the knowledge that you ought to possess, for the knowledge connected with the matrimonial custom-house consists solely in being able to make a rapid, but at the same time complete, survey of the moral and physical condition of all who come to see your wife at her house. A husband is like a spider in the middle of an invisible web; for a spider, watching from afar, forms his own opinion on what he observes, and sees either a prey or an enemy in every little fly that comes near enough to make its presence felt.

PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

You should be careful to make two examinations of the bachelor who rings at your door : one when he is about to enter and the other when he has entered.

When on the point of entering, how many are the things he says, without ever opening his lips !

You should see whether by a little push, or by passing his fingers through his hair several times, he pulls down or brushes back his forelock ;

Or hums a French or an Italian air, gay or sad, in a tenor, contralto, soprano, or barytone ;

Or makes sure that the end of his ' eloquent ' tie is gracefully tucked away ;

Or smooths down the well-folded or the crumpled frill of his day shirt or his evening shirt ;

Or tries to find out by a stealthy glance if his wig (fair or dark, curled or straight, or whatever it may be) is in the right place ;

Or looks to see if his nails are clean and well trimmed ;

Or twirls his moustache or his beard ; and whether the hand that does it is white or rough, well or ill gloved ;

Or starts combing his hair with a little tortoise-shell comb ;

Or whether with one or two gentle movements he tries to get his chin exactly in line with his tie ;

Or stands first on one leg and then on the other, with his hands in his pockets ;

Or looks at his boot and shakes it, as who should say : ' That is certainly not an ill-turned foot ! '

Or comes on foot or in a carriage ;

Or whether he does or does not wipe off any little spot of mud that may have got on his boot ;

Or even whether he stands perfectly still, as impassive as a Dutchman smoking ;

Or with his eyes fixed on the door, he looks like a soul let loose from hell, waiting for Peter and his keys ;

Or hesitates to pull the bell ; or seizes it carelessly,

THE CUSTOM-HOUSE

quickly, familiarly, or like a man who is quite sure of himself;

Or rings timidly, making a little tinkle re-echo in the silence of the rooms like the first bell for matins in a Franciscan convent in winter-time; or, having rung boldly, rings again, impatient at not hearing the foot-man's step;

Or delicately perfumes his breath with a cachou;

Or stiffly takes a pinch of snuff, carefully flicking off any specks that might spoil his spotless linen;

Or looks round him, taking stock of the lamp on the stairs, the carpet, the banisters, as if he were a furniture dealer or a builder;

Or, finally, whether this bachelor is young or old, cold or hot, comes slowly, sadly or gaily, and so on, and so on.

You feel that there, on your door-step, is an object from whom a thousand and one deductions may be made.

The figure that we have been endeavouring to portray in a few light touches will bring before your eyes a veritable moral kaleidoscope with its myriads of patterns, and all without bringing the woman into the tell-tale scene at all; if this had not been the case, our remarks, which are lengthy enough as it is, would have been as innumerable and as minute as the sands of the sea-shore.

As a matter of fact, when standing before a shut door a man thinks he is quite alone, and he spends the little time he has to wait in a kind of dumb monologue, an inarticulate soliloquy, during which everything about him, even to his footsteps, reveals his hopes, his desires, his intentions, his secrets, his characteristics, his faults, his virtues, etcetera; indeed, a man on a door-step is like a young girl of fifteen at confession on the day before her first communion.

Do you wish for a proof of this statement? Then observe the sudden change on the face and in the

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general behaviour of this bachelor as soon as he gets inside the house; the scene-shifter at the opera does not change the aspect of a theatre so quickly, nor does a change of temperature, a break in the clouds or the sun, so quickly alter atmosphere or sky. By the time he has reached the threshold of one of your reception-rooms, there remains of all the myriads of ideas suggested to you by this bachelor when on the door-step, not a single look for you to remark upon. The grimace of social conventionality has thrown a thick veil over everything; but a clever husband will already have guessed, at a glance, the object of his visit, and have read the heart of the new arrival like an open book.

The manner in which he approaches your wife, his way of talking to her, of looking at her, of greeting her, of taking leave of her offer you a whole volume of subjects for observation, each one more minute than the other.

The tone of his voice, his bearing, his embarrassment, his smile, his silence even, his melancholy, the attention he pays to you, are all instructive, and should all be studied carefully, but without any apparent effort; and you ought to hide even the most disagreeable discovery beneath the easy manner and the flowing conversation of a man of the world. As we are quite unable to go into every one of the enormous number of details contained in this subject, we will leave them entirely to the reader's own sagacity; he cannot fail to perceive the scope of knowledge of this kind; it begins with an analysis of looks, and ends with a power of perceiving movements caused by a pain in a toe hidden beneath a satin shoe or a leather boot!

But his departure! for we must take a case in which your rigorous examination on the threshold has failed, and then the departure becomes of vital interest, all the more as this new study of the bachelor is made with the help of the same elements of knowledge, applied in an inverse sense.

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The departure is a very critical time ; it is the moment when the enemy has cleared all the entrenchments where he might have been observed and has reached the street ! A man of intelligence ought to be able to understand the whole visit when he sees the man pass under the carriage-gate. The signs are not so numerous, it is true, but they are just as clearly defined ! The plot is being unravelled, and the man betrays its significance in an instant by the slightest expression of happiness, of pain, or of joy.

It is easy enough to gather your impressions : a look cast at the house, or at the windows of a room ; a slow lazy walk ; the rubbing together of the hands like a fool, or the " hop, skip, and a jump " of a coxcomb ; the involuntary stopping short of a man who is deeply moved ; in fact, as he leaves your door-step everything is made as clear to you as the subject of an essay for which a prize of five hundred francs has been offered by some provincial academy. Where it is so entirely a matter of individual tact and judgment, to designate the various ways in which men betray their feelings would be a task requiring more than human powers.

If it is necessary for you to apply these principles of observation to strangers, there is still greater reason for submitting your wife to similar tests.

A married man should make a profound study of his wife's face. It is quite easy—he will find himself engaged in this study almost involuntarily every moment of the day. His wife's expressive countenance need have no mysteries for him. He knows that her feelings are mirrored in her face, and can easily recognise them from the expression she assumes as she tries under the scrutiny of a keen glance to conceal them.

A movement of the lips, an almost imperceptible contraction of the nostrils, a slight dimness of the eye, an alteration in the voice, and those indefinable changes that take place in the features, the passions that

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light up the face—all speak to him in a language he may readily understand.

There she stands, and all can see her; but none can know the thoughts that fill her mind. But to the husband, if the pupil of her eye has a little deeper shade, or has expanded or contracted; if her eyelid has twitched, or her eyebrow moved ever so little; if a wrinkle, disappearing as quickly as a wave of the sea, has shown itself for a moment on her brow; if she has drawn in her lip; if she has bent down or raised herself up . . . to the husband, the wife has as good as spoken.

If, during the trying moments when a woman dissembles in the presence of her husband, he can preserve a sphinx-like impassivity, and at the same time read her through and through, he will easily see that the principles of the conjugal Custom-house will be mere child's play to him.

When she returns home, or when she is about to go out, your wife, being under the impression that she is alone, will be as imprudent as the crow in the fable—she will tell her secrets to herself out loud, and by the sudden change in her features at the moment when she sees you—a change which, no matter how quick she is, will still allow you time to see what her expression was just before you joined her—you will be able to read her soul as easily as a book of plain-song. Indeed, your wife will often be on the point of talking to herself, and at that time the exact state of her feelings may easily be discovered.

Is there a man so heedless of love's mysteries as not to have many a time admired the way in which a woman slips off to some rendezvous? How with delicate and coquettish little steps she glides along through the crowd like a snake in the grass. Fashionable dresses, the dazzling snares displayed in drapers' windows, hold out their seductions in vain; she goes on and on, like a faithful dog seeking for some sign of his master, deaf to all compliments, blind to all looks, insensible even to

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the little collisions with humanity that are bound to occur in Paris. How precious every minute is to her! Her dress, her walk, her face betray her a thousand times over. But what a ravishing picture she presents to any one who may happen to notice her, and what a sinister page for a husband does this woman's face unfold when she returns from the secret dwelling-place of her soul! . . . Her happiness is betrayed even by her coiffure, which is just a trifle untidy, for a bachelor's broken comb can never give to her wavy tresses that glossy and elegant appearance that the sure hand of a lady's-maid can impart. And how adorably easy is her whole bearing! How are we to describe the feeling which imparts so rich a colour to her skin, and removes all trace of boldness from her eyes—a feeling that is akin to melancholy and cheerfulness, to shame and to pride!

By such indications as these, stolen from the meditation on final symptoms, which belong to the time when a woman tries to conceal everything, you may reap, by analogy, a rich harvest of observations, a harvest that you may gather in when your wife returns, and when, the great crime not yet committed, she is innocently betraying her secret thoughts. For our part, we never see the steps leading to a house without wanting to erect a weather-cock by the side of them.

The means by which a house may be made into a sort of observatory depend entirely on place and circumstances, and we will leave the practical details of the advice given in this meditation to the skill of the jealous husband.

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SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE CONJUGAL CHARTER.

I CONFESS that I have known only one house in Paris constructed on the lines suggested by us in the last two meditations. But I ought to add that I have built up my system from that house. This admirable fortress belonged to a young state-councillor, a 'Master of Requests,' who was not only mad in love, but also of a very jealous disposition.

When he heard of the existence of a man who was giving himself up exclusively to bringing marriage to a state of perfection in France, he was polite enough to invite me to his house and to show me his wife's private apartments. I could not help admiring the great skill he had exercised in disguising beneath the elegance of the furniture, the beauty of the carpets, and the freshness of the pictures, the precautions of a jealousy almost oriental in its intensity. I am convinced that it would have been impossible for his wife to gain from the arrangement of her room any assistance in cloaking her infidelities.

'Sir,' said I to this Othello (a member, by the way, of that Council of State which has never seemed to me very strong on the subject of conjugal politics), 'I have no doubt that Madame la Vicomtesse derives great pleasure from living in the heart of this little paradise; indeed, she ought to be supremely happy, especially if you are often with her; but a time will come when she will have had enough of it; for one wearies of everything, even of the sublime. What then will you do when she, failing to find that charm in all your devices which at first she felt, opens her mouth and yawns, and perhaps presents you with a petition begging for the right to enjoy the two things in-

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dispensable to her happiness: her individual liberty—that is to say, the right to come and go of her own free will,—and the liberty of the press, or the right to send and receive letters without fear of your disapproval?’

I had scarcely finished speaking when Monsieur le Vicomte de V—— shook me heartily by the hand, and cried:

‘Oh, the ingratitude of women! If there is anything more ungrateful than a king it is a people; but, sir, a woman is more ungrateful than either. A married woman deals with us as the citizens of a constitutional monarchy deal with their king: it is in vain that he assures them of a happy life in a happy country; in vain does a government take all the trouble in the world with its police, its chambers, its administration, its standing army, to prevent the people from dying of hunger, to light the towns at the expense of the inhabitants, to warm all the people by the sun of the forty-fifth degree of latitude, and to forbid all but tax-collectors to ask for money; in vain does it pave the streets, whether well or ill; for no single one of the privileges of so fine a Utopia will be appreciated! . . . They are not ashamed to claim the right to walk the streets at will, or the right to know where the money that is paid to the tax-collector goes; and in the end the monarch would be compelled to give to each one a small share of his throne, or to adopt republican ideas, if he listened to the prating of certain scribblers—marionettes made to dance by a troop of so-called patriots, villains who are always ready to sell their conscience for a million francs, an honest woman or a ducal coronet.’

‘Monsieur le Vicomte,’ said I, interrupting him, ‘I entirely agree with you on this last point; but what sort of a reply will you be able to make to your wife’s just demands?’

‘Sir, I shall—I shall reply as do those members who are not such fools as the Opposition make them

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out to be in the eyes of their constituents. I shall begin by solemnly granting a kind of constitution, in virtue of which my wife shall be declared to be an absolutely free agent. I shall fully recognise her right to go wherever she pleases, to write to whom she chooses, and to receive letters of the contents of which I am not to be informed. My wife shall have all the privileges of the English Parliament: I shall allow her to talk as much as she likes, argue, propose strong and bold measures, but I shall not let her put them into execution—and then we shall see!’

‘By St. Joseph!’ said I, ‘here is a man who understands the science of marriage as well as I do myself.’

‘And then you find, sir,’ I replied aloud, in order to get fuller information from him, ‘you will find one fine morning that you are as big a fool as any one!’

‘Sir,’ he answered, in a serious tone, ‘allow me to finish. That is what great politicians call a theory, but they know well enough how to disperse the theory in practice, just as if it were smoke; and statesmen know better than all the attorneys in Normandy when to neglect a solid basis for idle formalities. Monsieur de Metternich and Monsieur de Pilat, both men of great weight, have long been asking whether Europe is in her right senses, whether she is dreaming, whether she knows whither she is drifting, whether she is exercising her reason at all—a thing which the masses, nations and women, are incapable of doing. Messieurs de Metternich and de Pilat are horrified at the sight of this century seized with a mania for constitutions (just as the century before this was attacked by philosophy, and Luther’s by the desire to reform the abuses of the Roman religion); for it really seems as if generations acted like a party of conspirators who each work separately for the same end, passing a watch-word one to the other. But theirs is a mistaken horror, and for that alone do I condemn them; for they are right in wishing to enjoy their power until the ap-

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pointed day when the commoners, from the heart of each of their six kingdoms, shall come to plague them. How can the sound morality which underlies the constitutional comedy have escaped men so noteworthy, and how can they have failed to see that it is the height of good policy to leave the Age a bone to pick? I am entirely at one with them on the matter of the sovereignty. A Government is a moral being, and as much concerned in its preservation as man himself is. The instinct for self-preservation is guided by one essential principle, which may be briefly expressed by the words: "Never throw away a chance." In order that it may never throw away a chance, its power must either grow or remain absolute, for stationary power is no power at all. If it is retrograde, it is no longer a power, but at the mercy of a new power. I know, as well as these gentlemen, in what a false position an absolute power is when it comes to granting a concession: a new power is brought into its midst, a power which from its very nature will go on increasing in strength. The one will necessarily nullify the other, for every existing thing tends to the greatest possible development of its forces. Therefore a power never makes concessions without trying to recall them. This struggle between the two parties constitutes our well-balanced Government, which, by the game it plays, horrifies the patriarch of Austrian diplomacy (without reason, it is true) because, forsooth, comedy for comedy, the least dangerous and the most lucrative, is that which England and France play. These two countries have said to their respective peoples; "You are free!" and they have been content; they take the place in the Government of a number of naughts that increase the value of unity. But when the people wish to bestir themselves, then the play begins; it is a repetition of the dinner Squire Sancho took when he tried to eat after having attained the sovereignty of his island on dry ground. Now we ordinary men ought to parody this wonderful scene in

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the bosom of our families. Thus my wife has a perfect right to go out, but she must tell me where and how and why she is going, and also when she expects to be back. Instead of extracting this information with the roughness of a policeman, who will, I have no doubt, some day learn better manners, I take care to assume a most gracious manner. Sportively playing round my lips, in my eyes, on my face, are to be seen, in turn, the signs of curiosity and indifference, of seriousness and of mirth, of opposition and of love. It is charming to take part in these little scenes of married life, so full of wit and tact and grace as they are. For the day on which I removed the wreath of orange blossom from my wife's head, I understood that we had played the preliminary scene of a long comedy, just as it is played at a king's coronation. I have police! I have my royal guard! I have my attorney-generals!' he continued, with renewed enthusiasm. 'I never allow Madame to go out without a footman in livery. Does it not show more tone? Besides, does it not give her the delight of displaying to every one the fact that she has men-servants? But my saving principle has been to make my walks always to coincide with my wife's, and, for two years, I have succeeded in showing her that to offer her my arm is an ever-fresh pleasure to me. If it is not good weather for walking, I try to teach her to drive a mettlesome steed with confidence, but I assure you that I do not let her learn too quickly! If by chance, or as the outcome of a wish very emphatically expressed, she should want to escape without a passport—that is to say, alone in her carriage—have I not a coachman, a lackey, a groom? My wife can go where she likes, but she takes with her a whole *sainte hermandad*, and I am not at all uneasy. But, for all this, my dear sir, how many are the ways of destroying the matrimonial charter in practice, the letter by its interpretation? I have noticed that the customs of high life conduce to a lounging idleness that consumes the greater part of a

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woman's life, before ever she feels she is alive. I have for my part formed a subtle plan for leading my wife on to the age of forty without her ever thinking of adultery, just as the late Musson amused himself by leading a civilian from the Rue Saint-Denis to Pierrefitte, without his realising that he had left the shade of the steeple of Saint-Leu.'

'Why!' I cried, interrupting him again, 'you have by chance hit upon those very deceptions which I intended to describe in a meditation entitled "The art of putting death into life!" Alas! I thought I was the first to discover that science, the concise title of which was suggested to me by the recital by a young doctor of a wonderful unpublished poem of Crabbe's. "Life in Death" has been personified by the English poet in a fantastic being called by that title. This personage is pursuing across the oceans of the world a living skeleton called "Death in Life." I remember that few of the guests of the accomplished translator of the English poem understood the full significance of this allegory, which is as true as it is fantastical. Sunk as I was in a kind of stupefied silence, perhaps I was the only one who thought on the generation after generation of people who pass through life without living. Women rose before me by the million—myriads of women, all dead and grievously afflicted, shedding tears of despair as they thought of the lost hours of their unenlightened youth. In the distance, I saw the birth of a mocking meditation—I already heard its satanic laughter; and now doubtless you are going to quash it.—But come now, tell me quickly by what means you help your wife to waste the passing moments when she is in the pride of her beauty, in the throes of her passions . . . perhaps you have left me a few stratagems, a few ruses to describe. . . .'

The Vicomte began to laugh at my literary disappointment, and said, with an air of satisfaction: 'My wife has, like all young people in our thrice-happy

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age, for three or four years spent her time in passing her fingers over the keys of a harmless piano. She has played through Beethoven, hummed the airs of Rossini, and mastered Cramer's exercises. Now I have taken care to convince her of her talent for music: to attain my end, I have applauded, have listened without a yawn to the most boring Sonatas in the world, and resigned myself to giving her a box at the Comic Opera. I have also secured three peaceful evenings out of the seven God has created in the week. I am on the look-out for musical families. There are in Paris drawing-rooms which are exactly like German snuff-boxes, a kind of everlasting "Componium," where I go regularly in search of that indigestion of harmony which my wife calls concerts. But for the most part she buries herself in scores. . . .'

'But, my dear sir, are you not aware of the danger of developing a taste for singing in your wife, and thus handing her over to all the perilous sensations of a sedentary life? You could not be more forgetful of what was due to you if you fed her on mutton or made her drink water.'

'My wife never eats anything but white meat, and I always take care that a concert shall be followed by a ball, a play at the "Italiens" by an evening party. I have also succeeded in persuading her to go to sleep between the hours of one and two every day. The good effects of this morning nap are incalculable! Moreover, each one of these necessary pleasures is granted as a favour, and I am regarded as a man who is always doing what his wife wants: I persuade her, without saying a single word, that she is being amused continuously from six o'clock in the evening, when we dress for dinner, until eleven in the morning, when we rise.'

'How grateful she ought to feel for so well-filled a life!'

'I have thus only three dangerous hours to dispose of; and she has her sonatas to study and her airs to

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hum ! And I can always propose a walk in the Bois de Boulogne, or a drive in the barouche, or a call. Nor is that all. Woman's first ornament is her cleanliness, and her cares in this direction can never be excessive or ridiculous. Therefore her toilet takes up some of the best moments of her day.'

'Why, you know as much about it as I do,' said I to myself. 'And then, sir,' I continued aloud, 'you should take up four hours a day by teaching her an art of which even the most refined of the fashionable ladies of to-day know nothing. . . . You should tell her of the astounding precautions necessitated by the Eastern luxury of the Roman ladies, mentioning the number of slaves employed at the bath of the Empress Poppea alone: the 'unctores,' 'fricatores,' 'alipilarili,' 'dropacistæ,' 'paratiltiriæ,' 'ficatrices,' 'tractatrices,' and so on. . . . Treat her to a description of the crowd of slaves mentioned by Mirabeau in his *Erotika Biblion*. While she is engaged in surrounding herself with a veritable little world of this kind, you will be able to enjoy many peaceful hours, to say nothing of the charms with which her person becomes endowed by her adoption of the system of the illustrious woman of Rome, every single hair of whose head was artistically dressed and bedewed with perfume, and whose every vein seemed to derive new blood from myrrh, white linen, perfume, seawater, flowers—and whose toilet was always made to the sounds of voluptuous music.'

'My good sir,' replied the husband, who was becoming more and more impatient, 'does not the question of health also furnish me with splendid pretexts? For the sake of her health, at once so precious and so dear to me, I forbid her to go out in bad weather, and in that way I account for quite a quarter of the year. And have I not introduced that tender custom—the good-bye kiss—without which, together with the words, "I'm going now, my darling!" neither ever goes out. In short, I have fully anticipated the future, and

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I have made my wife as much a prisoner in her own house as is a young recruit in his sentry-box. I have inspired her with an almost incredible enthusiasm for the sacred duties of motherhood.'

'In making her give up everything else for them?' I asked.

'Exactly,' said he, with a laugh. 'I maintain that it is impossible for a woman of the world to fulfil her obligations to Society, to manage a house, to give herself up to all the capricious calls of fashion and to every whim of the husband whom she loves, and at the same time bring up her children. She then protests that she will follow the example of Cato, who wanted to see for himself how the nurse changed the swaddling clothes of the great Pompey, and will not leave to others any of the little attentions exacted by the delicate bodies and tender minds of those little ones whose education begins in the cradle. You can understand that my diplomacy would not avail me much, if, after having in this way let my wife into the secret, I did not adopt the innocent plan of employing her perpetually in doing what she likes, and of invariably asking her advice on everything. As this mere shadow of freedom is sure to deceive a woman, no matter how clever she may be, I take care to sacrifice everything to convincing Madame de V—— that she, of all the wives to be found in Paris, enjoys the greatest amount of liberty; and, to attain this end, I am very careful to avoid the gross political errors so often committed by our ministers.'

'I can see you,' said I, 'when you want to juggle away one of the rights conceded to your wife by that Charter of yours—I can see you assuming a gentle and a thoughtful air, and I can hear you, as you plunge into her bosom the dagger which you keep hidden beneath a wreath of roses, asking her in a friendly tone: "Does it hurt, my darling?" To which she will probably reply, like a man when his toe has been trodden on: "Not at all!"'

He could not help smiling as he asked: 'Will

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not my wife be somewhat astonished on the day of judgment?’

‘I cannot say,’ I replied, ‘whether she or you will be the more astonished.’

The jealous creature frowned immediately, but his face once more assumed an expression of geniality as I added :—

‘Sir, I am deeply grateful to the Fates for having given me the pleasure of making your acquaintance. But for our conversation, I should certainly not have been able to develop some of the ideas that we seem to have in common. I must also ask you to be good enough to allow me to put this conversation into print. Where we have seen great political conceptions, others may only see irony of a more or less bitter nature, and I shall appear as a clever person in the eyes of the two parties who——’

While I was attempting to thank the Vicomte (the first husband I had ever met who was after my own heart), he showed me once more round his rooms, where everything seemed quite irreproachable.

I was about to take my leave when he opened the door of a little boudoir, and showed me into it, with the air of one who says, ‘Can you see any way in which the least disorder could be created, and my eyes not immediately recognise it?’

To this mute interrogation I replied with one of those inclinations of the head that guests make to their host when discussing some very special dish.

‘The entire system,’ said he, in low tones, ‘was suggested to me by some words my father heard fall from the lips of Napoleon at a full State Council, when the question of divorce was being discussed. “Adultery,” he cried, “is simply a question of a sofa.”’

‘See here ; I have transformed those accomplices into spies,’ added the Master of Requests, pointing to a divan covered with fawn-coloured kerseymere, the cushions of which were slightly crumpled. ‘Now that

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shows me that my wife has had a headache, and has been lying down. . . .’

On our going nearer to the divan I noticed the word FOOL ingeniously traced by four

‘ De ces je ne sais quoi, qu’une amante tire
Du verger de Cypris, labyrinthe des fées,
Et qu’un duc autrefois jugea si précieux
Qu’il voulut l’honorer d’une chevalerie,
Illustre et noble confrérie,
Moins pleine d’hommes que de dieux.’

‘ No one in this house has black hair ! ’ cried the husband suddenly, growing pale.

I fled, for my desire to laugh was so great that I could not trust myself to remain any longer.

‘ A doomed man ! ’ said I to myself. ‘ All the barriers with which he has surrounded his wife have only served as preparations for extraordinary pleasures.’

The thought saddened me. The discovery had not only destroyed three of my most important meditations, but had rendered the whole of my book open to question. I would gladly have paid for the Vicomtesse de V——’s faithfulness a sum such as most people would give for a single act of wickedness. But I was destined to keep my money.

As it happened I met the Master of Requests only three days later in the lobby of the ‘ Italiens.’ As soon as he caught sight of me he ran towards me. Moved by feelings of consideration, I tried to avoid him, but he took hold of my arm and whispered :—

‘ I have just spent three of the most wretched days of my life. Fortunately for me, my wife is even more innocent than a new-born babe. . . .’

‘ You have already told me that Madame la Vicomtesse is quick-witted,’ I chaffed him cruelly in reply.

‘ Oh ! I can enjoy a joke well enough to-night,’ said he, ‘ for this morning I received certain proofs of my wife’s faithfulness. I happened to rise very early to

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finish some urgent business. Looking absent-mindedly out on the garden, I saw the valet of the general who lives next door climb over the wall. My wife's maid, whose head I caught sight of in the porch, was patting a dog and helping to cover the gallant's retreat. I snatched up my field-glasses and looked fixedly at the marauder—— jet-black hair! Never has a Christian man's countenance given me greater pleasure. But, as you will readily believe, during the day the trellis-work has been torn down. Therefore, my good friend, when you get married, put your dog on the chain and stick bits of broken glass along the top of your walls.'

'Did Madame la Vicomtesse notice your anxiety during the last three days?'

'Do you take me for a child?' said he, shrugging his shoulders. 'Never in my life have I been so gay.'

'You are a great man!' I cried; 'and you are hiding your light under a bushel. And moreover you are not——'

I did not have time to finish, for he disappeared, having caught sight of one of his friends, who appeared to be about to make his bow to the Vicomtesse.

How can I add anything that would not be a tedious paraphrase of the lessons contained in this conversation, where all is either seed or fruit? And yet, Oh Husbands, you see your happiness hangs on a hair!

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE THEORY OF THE BED.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening. Seated in their academic chairs, they formed a semi-circle round a huge fireplace, in which a fire burned dimly—eternal symbol of the subject of their weighty discussions. From a glance at the serious faces of the members of this assembly, it would be easy to guess that they were about to pass a judgment upon the life and happiness of

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their fellow-men. Like the associates of an ancient and mysterious tribunal, they had received their commission from their consciences ; but they represented interests far greater than those of kings and nations, for they spoke in the name of the passions and of the happiness of the countless generations who were to follow them.

The grandson of the celebrated Boulle was seated at a round table, on which lay the thing in question, modelled with wonderful skill ; I, the poor secretary, also had a seat at this table, my duty being to write out the minutes of the meeting.

‘Gentlemen,’ said an old man, ‘the first question before us is clearly stated in a passage from a letter written to Caroline of Anspach, Princess of Wales, by the mother of the Regent, the widow of the brother of Louis XIV. : “The Queen of Spain has a sure way of making all her wants known to her husband. The King is devout ; he thinks he would be damned eternally if he had dealings with any woman other than his wife, and the good prince is at the same time of a very loving nature. This is the way in which the Queen gets all she wants out of him. She has had casters put to her husband’s bed. If he refuses to grant her anything she may ask, she pushes his bed as far as possible from her own. If he agrees to her demands the beds are drawn nearer together, and she allows him to get into hers. The greatest happiness known to the King, who is excessively” I will go no further, gentlemen, for the German princess with her honest plain-speaking might here be taxed with immodesty. Would it be wise for husbands to adopt beds with casters ?—that is the problem before us.’

The voting left no doubt on the matter. I was ordered to consign to the minute-book the following resolution, namely, that : if husband and wife slept in two separate beds in the same room, the beds ought on no account to have casters.

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‘ But,’ added a member, ‘ this decision is not in any way to prejudice what may later be resolved on as to the best way for a husband and wife to sleep.’

The President handed me an elegantly bound volume, containing the original edition, published in 1788, of the letters of Madame Charlotte-Elizabeth de Bavière, the widow of the only brother of Louis XIV., and while I was transcribing the quoted passages he made the following reply :—

‘ You ought to have observed that on the agenda of the meeting this question comes second in order.’

‘ I crave permission to address the meeting,’ cried the youngest of the husbands assembled.

The President took his seat, having made a sign for the young man to proceed.

‘ Gentlemen,’ said the latter, ‘ are we in a position to deliberate on so serious a problem as that which arises from the almost universal unsuitableness of the bedsteads in use at the present time ? Does it not embrace a question far wider than the simple one of cabinet-making ? For my part I see in it a problem that concerns the human mind. The miracle of conception, gentlemen, is as yet shrouded in mystery, and modern science has done little to dispel it. We do not know to what an extent external circumstances affect those microscopic germs discovered by the untiring efforts and patient research of men like Hill, Baker, Joblot, Eichorn, Gleichen, Spallanzani, and, above all, Müller ; and, lastly, Monsieur Bory de Saint-Vincent. The imperfections of our bedsteads give rise to a question of the utmost importance which relates to Music. I may say that I have just written to Italy for information as to the way in which beds are usually constructed in that country . . . We shall, I hope, soon know if they use curtain-rods, screws, casters, whether the general arrangements in that country are of a more vicious character than anywhere else, and whether the dryness of the wood, due to the action of the sun, does

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not bring about, *ab ovo*, that feeling for harmony which is innate in the Italians. On account of our ignorance on this point, I demand an adjournment.'

'We surely have not come here to bother ourselves about music!' cried a country squire from the West, rising abruptly. 'It is entirely a question of morality—a question which takes precedence before all others.'

'Nevertheless,' said one of the most influential members of the council, 'the advice of the former speaker ought not, in my mind, to be neglected altogether. In the last century, gentlemen, one of the most philosophically amusing and amusingly philosophical of writers—I mean Laurence Sterne—complained of the careless way in which men were begotten: "O shame!" cried he, "that he who copies the divine face of man should receive garlands and cheers, while he who presents us with the masterpiece, the prototype of mimic labour, has, like virtue, no other reward than the task itself." Ought not the improvement of the human race to take precedence over that of horses? I may tell you, gentlemen, that I once passed through a little town in the district of Orleans, where the entire population was composed of sour and surly-looking humpbacks, true children of misfortune. . . . The remarks of the former speaker have called to my mind the fact that all the bedsteads in that town were in a very bad condition, and that the rooms were, without exception, hideous. Gentlemen, I ask you, can our minds possibly attain to a condition in any way approaching that in which our ideas would have them be, when, in the place of angels' music, floating here and there in the heart of the heavens to which we ultimately rise, there grates upon our ears the screeching notes of the most wearing, exasperating, and execrable of earthly melodies? It may be that we are wanting in that genius which at one time led to humanity's being blessed with solidly constructed bedsteads, and that the restless people who brought about

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the Revolution were, perhaps, conceived on ramshackle furniture, with crooked, rickety legs; whereas that handsome race, the Orientals, had a special set of rules on the subject of sleeping.—I am for the adjournment.’

With these words he resumed his seat.

A man of methodist persuasion then rose to address the meeting :—

‘ Why should we change the subject under discussion? Is it not a question of improving the race, or of improving the conditions under which it is produced. We must not lose sight of the anxieties arising from a husband’s jealousy, or of the principles of healthy morality. Are you not aware that the noises of which you complain have more terrors for the wife hesitating on the brink of wrong-doing than would the strident tones of the last trump? Do you forget that for every divorce granted to a husband, he has to thank this tell-tale evidence? I advise you, gentlemen, to read the account of the divorce of Lord Abergavenny, of Viscount Bolingbroke, of the late Queen, of Eliza Draper, of Mrs. Harris—in fact, all the accounts contained in the twenty volumes published by . . . ’ (The secretary did not catch the name of the English publisher.)

The meeting was adjourned. The youngest member proposed that a collection should be made and the amount offered as a prize for the best dissertation on this subject, which Sterne looked upon as so important; but when the meeting broke up, only eighteen shillings were found in the President’s hat.

The Society which was recently formed in London for the improvement of manners and of marriage, and which Lord Byron attacked with such biting satire, has through the kindness of the Honourable W. Hawkins, a cousin of the celebrated Captain Clutterbuck, transmitted to us an account of one of its debates.

The extract may serve as a solution of the difficulties which are met with in regard to that part of the ‘ theory of the bed ’ which relates to its construction.

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But I find that the English Society has placed too much importance on that side of the question. There are as many good reasons for being a 'separatist' as a 'unionist' in the matter of the bedstead; the solution of the difficulty is, I confess, quite beyond my powers. I agree with Laurence Sterne that it is a disgrace to European civilisation that there are to be found so few physiological observations on 'callipédie;' he refrains from giving the results of his meditations on the subject, on account of the difficulty of expressing himself in language that would be in any way intelligible and at the same time fit for the ears of young ladies! There is in consequence a serious omission in one part of his book; but he will have the satisfaction of bequeathing to the coming generation a fourth book, comprising all that he has omitted, a magnificent 'negative' book—and all who are rich in ideas might follow his example.

The theory of the bed offers for consideration questions that are of far greater importance than those suggested by casters or illicit whisperings.

We know of only three ways of arranging a bed (in the accepted sense of the phrase) practised among civilised nations, and especially among those privileged classes to whom this book is addressed.

They are :—

- I. A twin-bedstead.
- II. Two separate rooms.
- III. A double-bed.

Before entering upon an examination of these three specific methods, which must necessarily have such various influences on the happiness of husband and wife, we ought perhaps to glance rapidly over the general question of the influence of the bed and the part it plays in the political economy of human life.

In the first place, it is an incontestible fact that the bed is intended to be slept in.

It will be easy to prove that the habit of sleeping

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together on the part of husband and wife is, as compared with the antiquity of marriage itself, of quite recent origin.

How man came to introduce a practice so fatal to happiness, health, and enjoyment—to self-esteem even—would be an interesting matter to investigate.

If you knew that one of your rivals had found a way of placing you, in full view of the woman who is dear to you, in a situation in which you must appear sublimely ridiculous :—for example, with your mouth all distorted like that of a mask, or with your eloquent lips dribbling like the copper orifice of some greedy fountain—you would no doubt stab him to the heart. Such a rival is sleep.

Is there a man living who knows what he looks like and what he does when he is asleep? We are then living corpses, at the mercy of an unknown power that lays hold of us in spite of ourselves, and manifests itself in the strangest ways ; some men sleep intelligently, others like clowns.

There are people who sleep with their mouths open, in the most ludicrous fashion.

There are others who snore loud enough to shake the roof.

Most people remind one of the gargoyles of Michael Angelo, sticking out their tongues at the passers-by.

I know of only one being in the world who has a noble aspect when asleep, and that is the Agamemnon whom Guérin has depicted at the moment when Clytemnestra, urged on by Ægisthus, is drawing near to murder him. I have always had an ambition to be able to lie on my pillow like the king of kings, from the time when I was possessed by the fear of being seen by other eyes than those of Providence. So too, ever since the day when I saw my old nurse giving herself airs, to use a popular but time-honoured expression, I have always added to the special litany I am in the habit of chanting to my patron saint, St.

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Honoré, a prayer that he may save me from such pitiable 'showing off.'

When a man wakes up in the morning with a dull, stupid face, a grotesque figure in a bandana (which has fallen over his eyes like a policeman's cap), he certainly looks neither more nor less than a buffoon, and it would indeed be hard to see in him that glorious spouse immortalised in the pages of Rousseau; but at length some faint suggestion of life creeps into the heavy, half-dead face. . . . And I would recommend any artists who are desirous of collecting a splendid set of caricatures to travel by the mail, and to examine the heads of the various officials in every little village where they happen to have been awakened by the coachman! . . . Were you a hundred times better-looking than these bureaucrats, at least your mouth was shut, your eyes open; at least your face wore some sort of an expression; . . . but—do you know how you looked an hour before you woke, or during the first hour of your sleep, when, neither man nor animal, you were lost in the land of the dreams that come to cuckolds? That is a secret known only to your wife and to God!

Was it that they might be constantly reminded of the imbecility produced by sleep that the Romans adorned the top of their bedsteads with an ass's head? We will leave the worthy members of the Academy of Inscriptions to clear up this point.

Assuredly as soon as a man makes up his mind, on the advice of the devil, that he will never leave his wife's side, even in sleep, he must know how to sleep so as never to appear at a disadvantage. Before he enters the estate of matrimony he must take care that the art of sleeping elegantly is among the sciences of which he has some knowledge. We subjoin the following aphorisms as a postscript to Axiom XXV. of the 'Matrimonial Catechism':—

'A husband should sleep as lightly as a watch-dog, so that he may never be caught sleeping.

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‘ From his infancy a man should accustom himself to sleeping bareheaded.’

Poets would find a reason in modesty and in love’s mysteries for husband and wife to lie together ; but it is a known fact that primitive man sought the shade of a cavern, the moss of a ravine, the rocky vaults of a cave wherein to house his pleasures, for the reason that love put him at the mercy of his enemies. Now it is no more natural for two heads to lie on one pillow than it is reasonable to wind a strip of muslin round one’s neck. But Civilisation came, and the result is that a million human beings are shut up in four square miles ; she has herded them in streets, in houses, in rooms, in chambers, in bedrooms eight foot square ; before long she will try to put one inside the other, like a pair of opera-glasses in a case.

From this and many other causes, such as economy, fear, misunderstood jealousy, has arisen the custom of the cohabitation of man and wife, and from this custom has come periodical and simultaneous going to bed and getting up.

And thus the most capricious thing in all the world, that essentially variable feeling, which owes its very existence to an inspiration of the most delicate order, and derives all its charms from the spontaneity of its desires, which yields pleasure only inasmuch as its demonstrations are sincere ; thus we see, in a word, the passion of love being put under monastic rule and being submitted to the calculations of the Board of Longitude !

Were I a father I should hate the child who had as it were an explosion of tenderness morning and evening as regular as clockwork, and who came to me to say ‘ Good morning ’ or ‘ Good night ’ because he had been told to do so. It is in this way that we choke all that is generous and spontaneous in human feeling. What can one think of love at a fixed hour ?

It only remains for the Author of all things to cause

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the sun to rise and set, night and morning, with a splendour that is ever glorious, ever new, and there is no one here below (with all due deference to Jean-Baptiste Rousseau's hyperbole) but would shrink from playing the part of the sun.

It will be gathered, then, from these preliminary remarks, that it is in no way natural for two people to occupy one bed ;

That a man when asleep nearly always looks ridiculous ;

And, finally, that for the husband to be for ever by the side of his wife is a most dangerous thing.

We will now endeavour to bring about a harmony between the habits we have come to adopt and nature, and to combine nature and those habits in such a way that the husband may find in his mahogany bedstead greater usefulness and additional means of defence.

I.—THE TWIN BEDSTEAD.

If the wittiest, handsomest, and most intelligent of husbands wishes to be minotaurised at the end of a year of married life, he will most certainly obtain his desire if he is imprudent enough to unite two beds under one voluptuous canopy.

His sentence is summary, and the following are my reasons for awarding it :—

The first husband to use twin beds was doubtless a man who kicked so badly in his sleep that he was anxious to save his unborn child from injury.

Or no ; it is more likely to have been some poor ' fore-ordained ' creature who mistrusted himself, or who was suffering from a rather too musical cold in his head.

Or perhaps it was a young man who had misgivings as to the force of his passion, and was consequently always finding himself half out of the bed, or too close to his dear wife and disturbing her sleep.

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On the other hand, may it not have been a Maintenon backed up by her confessor, or rather some ambitious woman overcome by a desire to govern her husband? Or more likely still some pretty little Pompadour who had fallen a victim to that Parisian infirmity so happily described by Monsieur de Maurepas in a quatrain which may have been the cause of his long disgrace, and which certainly contributed to the misfortunes of the reign of Louis XVI. :—

‘ Iris, on aime vos appas,
Vos grâces sont vives et franches ;
Et les fleurs naissent sur vos pas,
Mais ce ne sont que des fleurs. . . . ’

Why may it not have been some philosopher horrified at the idea of the inevitable disenchantment of his wife when she should see him asleep? He would always be tucked away under the counterpane, without any nightcap on his head.

Oh! unknown author of this Jesuitical way of sleeping, whoever thou art, in the name of the devil we cry, ‘ All hail ! ’ to thee. Thou art responsible for many a misfortune. Thine is a work of ‘ half-measures,’ good for nothing, and possessing all the inconveniences of the other two ways of sleeping without any of their advantages.

When we consider that being of sovereign intellect, a man of the nineteenth century, who has given evidence of almost supernatural powers, who has called upon the whole of the resources of his genius to aid him in hiding from view the wheels of his being, glorifying his desires to save them from being held in disgust—going so far as to make use of the perfumes of Chinese leaves, the treasures of Egyptian beans, and the pith from Mexican seeds, so far as to cut crystals, to fashion silver, to refine gold, to paint clay—to seek, in fact, the aid of all the arts in the process of adorning and bettering his morsel of food—

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when we consider all these things, it is impossible to understand how this king, after he has hidden under folds of muslin, smothered in diamonds, covered with rubies, buried in white linen, and laces, and rich-coloured silks, the second of his poor wants—that is, woman,—it is impossible to understand, I say, how he could have brought himself to allow her to become in the end stranded in all her luxury on a wooden bedstead ! Of what use is it to tamper with the entire universe for sustenance, for food for our illusions and our poetry ? Of what avail is it to make laws, to institute a system of morals, and to set up religions, if the invention of an upholsterer (for perhaps an upholsterer invented the twin bedstead) is to deprive love of all its illusions, strip it of its dignity, and leave only its ugliest and most odious characteristics ?—for that is the whole history of the twin bedstead.

LXIII.—To appear sublime or ridiculous—such is the alternative to which desire has been brought.

Sleep alone, and your love will be sublime ; sleep in a twin bedstead, and it will be ridiculous. The number of misconstructions arising out of this state of semi-separation may be reduced to two situations, both of which will help to explain the origin of a great deal of unhappiness.

At about midnight a young wife yawns and begins to put up her hair in curl-papers. I cannot say whether her melancholy is due to a headache or to one of those attacks of depression during which everything looks black ; but at any rate to judge from the lackadaisical way in which she is making her preparations for bed, and the languid way she is lifting her leg to pull off a garter, I should imagine that she would rather drown herself than forego the refreshing sleep so badly needed for the invigoration of her jaded body. For the moment her spirits are at zero, or at any rate as

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low as the temperature of Spitzbergen or Greenland. Heedless of her surroundings and shivering with cold, she has gone to bed, thinking, perhaps, as Mrs. Walter Shandy thought, that to-morrow will be a day of gloom, that her husband is very late, that the snow-eggs she has eaten were not sweet enough, that she owes her dressmaker 500 francs; thinking, in fact, of all the things one might imagine a woman in low spirits would be thinking of. Meanwhile the strapping young husband has come in; after finishing up some business matter, he has indulged rather freely in whiskey-punch, and is feeling lively. He takes off his boots, flings his clothes on a chair, leaves his socks on the sofa, his book-jacks on the hearthrug; and trying to smother his head in a red bandana (without troubling to tuck in the corners), he throws out remarks to his wife—little conjugal amenities, which often comprise the whole of a husband and wife's conversation at those late hours when the light of their sleepy minds has almost faded. 'You have gone to bed, then?—How beastly cold it is to-night!—Haven't you anything to say, darling?—Already tucked up in your own bed?—You little rogue, pretending to be asleep!' These remarks are interspersed with yawns; and, after a number of little events which, according to the customs of each household, must needs diversify the preparations for the night, at last our hero plunges heavily into bed. But then, as soon as he closes his eyes, there appear, as on an imaginary sheet, enticing visions of pretty faces and dainty limbs; he sees again the attractive outlines which he had seen from time to time during the day. He is a prey to passionate longings. He glances towards his wife, and sees a lovely face framed in the most exquisite embroideries; however fast asleep she may be, the fire in his eyes seems to pierce the lace ruchings that half-hide her eyes; divinely beautiful shapes are suggested beneath the folds of the counterpane. 'Ma Minette!' 'I am asleep, my dear.' How

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are you to land on the shores of such a Lapland? You are young, handsome, clever, attractive; but how are you to jump the narrow strait that separates Greenland from sunny Italy? The distance between heaven and hell is not more impassable than the space which divides your two beds, and prevents them from being one; for your wife is cold, and you are in the full flood of a burning desire. If only a purely mechanical movement were needed to enable the husband to stride from one bed to the other, such a movement would be enough to place him, bandana and all, in the most awkward situation in the world. With lovers, the danger, the uncertainty, the opportunity, all increase the misery of such situations as these; yet love casts a cloak of purple and gold over everything, even over the smoking ruins of a fallen town, and marriage, if it would avoid the sight of crumbling ruins on the gayest carpet, and under the most seductive silken folds, must turn its attention to love's magic spells. If you take but a second to enter your wife's preserves, DUTY, the god of marriage, would have time to appear before her in all its ugliness.

Alas! to a wife who is cold, how foolish must a man seem whom desire renders now angry, now tender; now insulting, now supplicating; now as biting as an epigram, now sweet as a madrigal; when indeed he is acting, with more or less success, the scene from *Venise sauvée*, in which Otway's genius has given us a picture of the senator, Antonio, repeating over and over again, at the feet of Aquilina, 'Aquilina, Quilina, Lina, Aqui, Nacki!' without any other reward than a cut from a whip, whereupon he proceeds to cringe and fawn. In the eyes of all women, even of his lawful wife, the more passionate a man is in a case of this kind, the more foolish he appears. If he insists, he wins hatred; if he abuses his power, he becomes 'minotaurised.' Look up some of the aphorisms of our Matrimonial Catechism, and you will find that you are violating some of its most sacred principles.

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Whether a woman yields, or whether she does not, twin beds introduce into marriage so strong an element of what is blunt and obvious that no matter how chaste the wife, or how pure-minded the husband, they are in the end bound to become immodest.

Over against this scene, which is enacted in a thousand and one different ways, and which may find a beginning in a thousand and one little incidents of various kinds, we may set another, which is far more terrible and certainly less pleasing.

One evening, when I was conversing on these important topics with the late Comte de Nocé, of whom I have already had occasion to speak, a white-haired old man, an intimate friend of his (whose name, as he is still living, I will not disclose) looked at us with a very sad expression in his eyes. We guessed he was about to tell us of some scandal, and therefore contemplated him almost as a reporter of the *Moniteur* would watch a minister mount the rostrum to make a speech which had been communicated to him beforehand. The speaker was an old emigrant, a Marquis whose fortune, wife, and children had all perished in the disasters of the Revolution. The Marquise had been one of the most indiscreet women of her time, and he had not lacked opportunities of observing the nature of women. Having arrived at an age when one sees things only, as it were, from the 'bottom of the ditch,' he spoke of himself as one might speak of Mark Antony or of Cleopatra.

'My young friend' (he paid me the compliment of addressing his remarks to me, for it was I who had been the last speaker in the previous discussion), 'your observations call to my mind a certain evening when one of my friends risked the utter loss of any respect his wife might have had for him. Now in those days a woman was able to revenge herself on her husband with extraordinary facility, for the distance between the cup and the lip was very small indeed. These married

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friends of mine used to sleep in two separate beds, joined together beneath the arch of an alcove. One evening they had returned from a very brilliant ball given by the Comte de Mercy, Ambassador to the Emperor. The husband had lost fairly heavily at cards, so that on their return he was completely wrapped up in his reflections. It was a matter of paying eighteen hundred francs on the morrow!—and you, Nocé, will remember that those were times when one would often experience a difficulty, even with the help of ten musketeers, in getting together as much as three hundred francs. The young wife, as so often happens in such cases, was in a hopelessly gay mood. “Give Monsieur le Marquis all he may need for the night,” she said to the valet (in those times one dressed for bed as well as for the day). Even these curious words did not succeed in rousing the husband from his lethargy. Then Madame, with the help of her maid, started upon a series of little flirtations. “Were you pleased with my looks to-night?” she asked. “I am always pleased with them,” replied the Marquis, continuing to tramp up and down the room. “You are very gloomy! Speak to me, my melancholy darling,” she said, planting herself in front of him, in a most seductive attitude.—You cannot have any idea of the charm of the Marquise; you ought to have known her.—‘You knew her, Nocé!’ he said, with a mocking smile. Notwithstanding her playfulness and her beauty, all her mischievous stratagems were of no avail in the face of the eighteen thousand francs that her fool of a husband *could* not get out of his mind, and she lay down in her own bed alone. But women usually have at their command a plentiful supply of artfulness upon which to draw; and, just as her husband was about to get into his bed, she cried out, “Oh, how cold I am!” “And I too!” he replied. “How is it that they do not warm the beds? I will ring and . . .”

The Comte de Nocé could not help laughing, and the old Marquis said no more.

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Not to be aware of the state of one's wife's desires, to snore when she is lying awake, to be in Siberia when she is in the Tropics—such are some of the smaller inconveniences of twin-beds. What risks would not a passionate woman run when once she has realised that her husband is a heavy sleeper?

I am indebted to Beyle for an Italian tale; he told it me as an example of woman's intrepidity, and his dry manner invested it with extraordinary charm.

Ludovico had his palace at one end of Milan, and at the other end was the palace of the Comtesse Perneti. At midnight Ludovico determined at the risk of his life to brave all dangers for one glance at his beloved's face. He got into the palace in some magical way, and reached the marriage chamber. Elisa Perneti, whose heart perhaps shared the desires of her lover's, heard a noise and recognised his step. Through the walls of the room she saw a vision of a face all on fire with love. She rose from her bed. As lightly as a shadow she gained the door, gave Ludovico a look that seemed to penetrate to his very soul, seized his hand, made a sign of silence, and led him away.

'But he will kill you!' said Ludovico.

'That may be,' said she.

It may be said that all this has not much significance, and that if it be granted that most husbands are light sleepers, that they sleep without snoring, and that they can always tell the exact state of their wives' emotions at any particular moment—then all the objections to twin-beds fall to the ground. Very well!—we will now put forward a final reason for proscribing the use of beds that are joined to one another.

We have hitherto been considering the marriage-bed as a means of defence. It is only when in bed that a husband is able to discover each night whether his wife's love for him is increasing or decreasing. The bed is his conjugal barometer. Now, to sleep in twin-beds is to shut your eyes to everything. When we come, in

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Part III., to the subject of civil war, you will see how wonderfully useful a bed can be, and how many secrets are involuntarily revealed there by the woman.

Therefore you must never allow yourself to be led away by the false air of simplicity that surrounds twin-beds.

It is the most stupid, the most treacherous, and the most dangerous invention in the world. Shame and anathema on the being who first thought of it!

But while this method of sleeping is pernicious for young married people, it is healthy and proper for those who have reached the twentieth year of married life; for then husband and wife can perform to their hearts' content the duets rendered necessary by their respective colds in the head! When they are suffering from a twinge of rheumatism, or an obstinate attack of gout, or even when they feel they must have a pinch of snuff, they will bless the advantages of sleeping separately, with only the memory of the delights of their early love to cheer them—that is, if fits of coughing do not monopolise the whole time. Our opinion on the matter is not in the least affected by any of those exceptional cases which sometimes occur—when a husband *is* sometimes entitled to make use of twin-beds. Such cases are all no more nor less than calamities. Yet it was Buonaparte's opinion that when once there has been 'an interchange of the soul and of the breath' (I quote his actual words) nothing, not even illness, ought to separate husband and wife. This question is of too delicate a nature to admit of its being submitted to any fixed rules.

Narrow-minded people may also object that there are in existence several patriarchal families whose ideas of what is right and wrong in erotic law have never been in any way affected by the use of twin-bedsteads, and who have handed down from father to son unbroken happiness. My only answer to this is that I know of many very respectable people who spend their lives in watching a game of billiards!

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No sensible people should, then, from this time onward, have anything to do with this way of sleeping;—we will pass to the second way of arranging the nuptial couch.

TWO SEPARATE ROOMS.

There are not to be found in any nation in Europe a hundred husbands with a sufficient knowledge of the science of marriage—or, for that matter, of life—to warrant their having a separate room from that of the wife.

To succeed in putting such a system into practice is a sign of quite exceptional strong-mindedness and manliness.

A husband and wife who are in the habit of occupying separate rooms are either beings apart, or they have found happiness. Either they hate or they adore each other.

We will not here attempt to enumerate the admirable precepts of this theory, whose aim is to render the virtues of constancy and faithfulness easy and attractive. I refrain from doing so out of consideration for my readers, and not from incapacity. It is enough that I have stated definitely that it is possible by this system for husband and wife to realise the dreams that so many fine souls have realised: all who have been faithful to their vows will understand my meaning.

As for the ignorant! . . . I can deal very shortly with their curiosity by saying that the object of this arrangement is to give happiness to one single woman. Which of them is willing to strip human beings of all the faculties they think they possess for the sake of—a woman? And yet for a man to be able to assert that he has made a comrade happy is surely a fair title to glory?—for, according to Genesis, Eve herself was not satisfied with her earthly paradise, and therefore she ate of that forbidden fruit—the eternal symbol of adultery.

But there is a peremptory reason against our de-

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veloping this brilliant theory—it would be a digression from the subject of the book. When affairs in a household are in a condition such as we have described, the man imprudent enough to sleep at any distance from his wife would not deserve even pity on account of any misfortune that might ensue.

All men are not able to occupy a separate room for the reason that they are not strong enough; but on the other hand all men are capable of extricating themselves (with more or less success) from the dangers arising from the use of a single bed. We will now proceed to a discussion of the difficulties which superficial minds may see in this last method, our predilection for which must be sufficiently evident.

May what follows, which indeed contains but little that is new, but which the annals of many a house could supply with matter, serve as a pedestal for an imposing statue of Lycurgus, to whom, of all bygone legislators, the Greeks are indebted for the most profound reflections on marriage. May his system of sleeping be followed by future generations! And if modern manners have too softening an influence over us to admit of our adopting it altogether, let us hope at least that our minds may become impregnated with the robust spirit of this admirable legislator.

ONE AND THE SAME BED.

One night in the month of December, when the stars were shining with that peculiar brilliancy which they usually display on very cold nights, Frederick the Great is said to have exclaimed, as he contemplated the heavens, ‘Weather like this ought to mean a great many more soldiers for Prussia!’

In that one sentence is summed up all the inconveniences of the principle that husband and wife should lie together always. Napoleon and Frederick may be permitted to think more or less highly of a wife accord-

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ing to the number of children she has borne ; but a husband, if he has any pretensions to common-sense, should, in accordance with the maxims of the thirteenth meditation, only consider the production of a child as a means of defence, and it rests with him to decide whether it is necessary to be lavish of this means or not.

This remark leads us to mysteries such as the Physiological Muse prefers to leave severely alone. She has consented to enter the nuptial chamber, when empty ; but she blushes, modest maiden that she is, when she is brought face to face with love and its doings.

The Muse at this point thinks fit to put her white palms before her eyes so that she may no longer see by peeping through slender fingers as a young girl does, and we will take advantage of this sudden access of modesty to administer a reproof to the manners of our country.

In England the nuptial chamber is regarded as sacred, only the husband and the wife having the privilege of entering it ; and it is said that many a wife goes so far as to make the bed herself. Why is it that, of all the manias from over the seas, the only one we have failed to adopt is that which ought by its force and mystery to have found favour in the eyes of all the more refined spirits of the Continent ? Women of delicacy condemn the immodest way in which strangers are introduced into the marriage sanctuary in France. We, who have so vehemently exclaimed against the women who make an unnecessary display of their pregnancy, consider that there can be no two opinions on the matter. If it is desirable that the bachelor shall respect marriage, married people must show some regard for the susceptibilities of the bachelor.

To sleep night after night with one's wife may seem, we admit, an act of the most impudent fatuity.

Many a husband may ask how a man who professes that his aim is the perfection of marriage dare lay down

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a rule for the husband that would inevitably be the ruin of a lover.

Nevertheless such is the decision of the present graduate in Conjugal Science and Art.

In the first place, unless he make up his mind never to sleep at home, there is no other course open to the husband, seeing the dangers (as pointed out by us) attendant on the two other methods of sleeping. What we must endeavour to show, then, is that this method of sleeping has, with regard to the present crisis in the affairs of our imaginary household, more advantages and fewer disadvantages than the first two methods.

Our remarks on twin-beds must at least have taught husbands that they ought practically always to know in what state of warmth his wife's harmonious feelings are. Now it seems to us that this knowledge can quite naturally be attained under the covering of the white linen shield that protects them; and that is at once an immense advantage.

As a matter of fact, when both heads lie on the same pillow, nothing is easier than to test the degree of heat which a woman's love-fever has reached throughout every hour of the night.

Man (we are here speaking of the species) possesses a memorandum ready to hand, by referring to which he can easily ascertain the amount of his sensuality. This mysterious 'gynometer' lies in the hollow of his hand. Of all our organs the hand is the one by which the state of our sensual affections is most readily betrayed. Some day I shall bequeath a fifth work to posterity, and it will deal with the whole question of Chirology. Here I shall content myself with bringing forward only those of its rudiments that bear especially on the present subject.

The hand is essentially an instrument of touch. Now touch is a sense that, in a case when it has to take the place of other senses, gives the fewest wrong impressions; no other sense can take its place. The

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hand, having by itself performed all that man has up to the present time conceived of doing, has as it were become action personified. The hand is the medium through which the whole of a man's power is made manifest, and it is worthy of remark that men of powerful intellect nearly always have beautiful hands: perfect hands are a marked characteristic of a lofty mind. Jesus Christ performed all his miracles by means of his hands. It is through the pores of the hands that life itself passes; and, on whatsoever they touch, the hands leave the mark of a magic power. Again the hand has a share in all the delights of love. It reveals to the doctor the mysteries of our bodies. From it, more than from any other part of the body, exude the nervous fluids, or rather that unknown substance which, for lack of a better term, we must call 'will.' The eye can reveal the condition of the soul; but the hand betrays at once the secrets of both body and mind. The art of imposing silence on our eyes, our lips, our eyebrows, or our foreheads can be acquired; but the hand can never be made to dissemble, and not one of our features can compare with it in eloquence of expression. The shades of heat and cold to which it is susceptible are so minute that they escape the notice of unobservant people altogether; but they may easily be distinguished by any one who has made any sort of study of the anatomy of the feelings in their relation to life. The hand can be dry, damp, burning, icy, soft, rough, oily. It can assume a state of palpitation, of smoothness, of hardness, of softness—in short, the hand presents an incomprehensible phenomenon which one is tempted to call the 'incarnation of the soul.' It is the despair of the painter, of the sculptor, who would portray its ever-varying phases. A man may be saved by the stretching out of a hand. It serves as the gauge of the various conditions of our feelings. In all ages, witches have been wont to read man's future destiny in those lines which, although they

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have nothing fantastical about them, correspond to the elements of his life and character. To be accused of want of *tact* is to be condemned irretrievably. We speak of 'the hand of justice,' 'the hand of God,' and, again, of a 'coup de main,' when we would describe some brave deed.

To learn to read the feelings by the atmospheric variations of the hand that a woman nearly always surrenders without mistrust is a study that yields far greater, and far surer, recompense than the study of the face.

Thus, by acquiring this Science, you become armed with a great power, and you gain possession of a thread that will guide you through the labyrinth of the most impenetrable of hearts. You will possess a talisman that will help you to avoid many of the errors attendant on your joint existence, and at the same time enrich it with many a treasure.

Now do you honestly think that you need to be a Hercules in order to sleep happily with your wife every night? . . . Of course you do not! Why, a clever husband has more resources at his back than Madame de Maintenon had when she was obliged, one night at dinner, to substitute an anecdote in place of a certain dish.

Buffon and several physiologists maintain that our organs suffer far more fatigue from the longings to which they are subject than from actual physical indulgence. Does not desire, as a matter of fact, give us as it were an intuitive enjoyment? Is it not to visible action what the events of the life we live in our dreams are to those of real life? Does not the act of *apprehension* necessitate a far greater internal excitement than that required for the carrying out of the actual deed? If our outward actions are but the manifestation of deeds fulfilled already by our minds, consider to what an extent ever-recurring desires must consume the vital fluids. Do not passions, which are nothing but a collection of desires, wrinkle the faces of the

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ambitious, of gamblers, and do they not waste the body in their consuming fire with marvellous rapidity?

Hence in these remarks it ought to be possible to discover the germs of a mysterious system, countenanced at once by Plato and by Epicurus. We leave this system to your private thoughts, hidden as it is beneath the veil of Egyptian statues.

But the greatest mistake a man can make is to think that love abides only in those fugitive moments which, to use Bossuet's splendid simile, may be likened in our lives to the nails in a wall: there seem, at first glance, to be many there; but, if they were gathered together, they could easily be held in one hand.

Love cannot live on words alone. Goodness, mercy, and tenderness are the only qualities in a lover that are inexhaustible. All that a woman asks is that her lover may be all-feeling and all-knowing; that he may make reproaches without hurting her feelings, show no signs of pride when he makes her a present, be clever enough to make his behaviour towards her appear to be worth double its real value, convey flattery by his actions and not by his words, lead her by easy stages to understand him, rather than himself show a readiness in seizing her meaning, handle her gently, behave so that his glances and the sound of his voice express a caress, never embarrass her, amuse without shocking her, warm her heart with pleasure, speak to her soul. . . . A woman would forfeit the whole of the delights of Messalina's nights to live with a man who would lavish upon her the caresses of this kind, of which women are so fond and which cost men so little.

In the foregoing lines are to be found most of the secrets of the marriage-bed. There may be wits who will take this lengthy definition of good-breeding for a definition of love, although it is really nothing more than a recommendation to behave towards one's wife as one would towards a minister who had the power of bestowing a coveted post.

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I can hear millions of voices crying out that this book more often pleads the cause of the wife than that of the husband ;

That most women are not worthy of assiduous attentions, and would only abuse them ;

That there are women who are given up to lust, and that such women would not for long put up with what they would call a hoax ;

That their name is vanity and their thoughts are dress ;

That they are subject to truly inexplicable infatuations ;

That they sometimes lose their tempers over what is merely an act of courtesy ;

That they are fools, and understand nothing, are worth nothing, &c., &c.

In reply to all this clamour we inscribe the following sentence, which, being written between two clear lines, will perhaps be taken for a deep thought—to use an expression of Beaumarchais.

LXIV. A Wife is what her husband makes her.

The advantages which ought to lead to the triumph of the single bed over the two other arrangements are : that it is a faithful and profoundly truthful interpreter of the wife's sentiments ; that it causes her to act as it were as a spy upon herself ; that it helps to sustain her love at its highest temperature ; that her husband never leaves his wife, and is able to listen to her when asleep, and that all the misconstructions by which so many marriages are wrecked are avoided.

Seeing that no boon is ever obtained for nothing, you on your side must learn to fall asleep elegantly, to preserve your dignity in your bandana, to be polite, to sleep lightly, to refrain from coughing, and to imitate modern authors who write more prefaces than they do books.

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EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

REVOLUTIONS.

WITH women (however foolish) as with nations there always comes a time when they realise that their artlessness is being abused. An artful policy may be the means of deceiving them for a long time, but that it should do so for ever would be too great a blessing for man to expect. If only it did, what an enormous saving of bloodshed there would be!

Nevertheless we may hope that the means of defence considered in the preceding meditations may be sufficient to keep a certain number of husbands out of the minotaur's clutches!

By all means agree with the doctor when he says that love can in many cases be made to perish under a stealthy course of hygiene, or at all events may be weakened by the husband's pursuing a careful policy. Yes (and this is surely a consoling error), love can often be driven out by 'personal means,' and all husbands may be able to throw an impenetrable veil over their machiavelism; they will probably become more successful in the art of deception than the ancient philosophers who cried 'Nolo coronari!'

But unfortunately we are compelled to recognise what is indeed a melancholy truth. Despotism has its hour of apparent security, a time that may be likened to that which precedes a storm, when everything is so still that a traveller, reclining on the yellowing grass, may hear a grasshopper chirping a mile away. One fine morning an honest woman (and the majority of women will sooner or later follow her example) will, in a single penetrating glance, see through all the clever manœuvres of the infernal policy of which she has been the victim. Her first feelings are of passionate anger at having

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been virtuous so long. If you ask at what age or on what day does this terrible revolution break out, our answer is that it depends entirely on the talents of the particular husband in question, for it is not given to all to put into practice the precepts of our matrimonial Evangel with the same success.

‘He cannot have loved me much!’ cries the wife who has been imposed upon, ‘if he could descend to such meannesses. Why, he has been suspecting me from the very first day! . . . It is monstrous! a woman could *never* be capable of such cruelty and treachery.’

That is her theme. Every husband will be able to imagine for himself the variations that will be made on it, according to the character of the young fury of whom he ought to have made a comrade.

The woman will not at once fall into a passion. She will keep silent and dissimulate. Her vengeance will be a thing of mystery. Originally, when things came to a crisis at the end of the honeymoon, you had only her doubts and her hesitation to fight against; now you have to struggle against a firm resolve. She has made up her mind that she will have her revenge. From this day forward an iron mask conceals the inner workings of a heart of iron. At one time she was only indifferent to you, but gradually you have become unbearable. The actual civil war will not begin until the moment when, just as one little drop added to a glass already full of water will cause it to overflow, something occurs to make you odious—of the special significance of the particular thing it will be difficult for you to judge. The time that elapses between the last fatal hour, when all hopes of a right understanding between you come to an end, and the day when your wife first becomes aware of your manœuvres is, however, of sufficient duration to allow of your carrying out a series of defensive means which we will now put before you.

Up to this time you have only been protecting your honour by means of a power which you have kept well

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in the background. Henceforward the working of the wheels of the conjugal machine will be in full view of the world. Where before you were only acting so as to prevent a crime, now you must strike. Your career began with negotiations ; it must end in your mounting a war-horse, sword in hand, like a Paris gendarme. Your steed must be made to caracole, you must brandish your sword, you must shout as loud as you can, and you must do your best to quell the riot without wounding any one.

Just as I have pointed out when a change from the use of ' hidden means ' to that of ' open means ' become necessary, so must a husband justify his abrupt change of policy ; for, in marriage as in literature, the true art lies wholly in the elegance with which these changes are made. It is of the greatest importance to you. How dreadful it would be if your wife had had to complain of your conduct at this moment—perhaps the most critical in the whole of your married life !

You must, then, discover a way of justifying the secret tyranny of your first policy, a way such as will prepare your wife for the harshness of the measures you are about to take ; a way which, so far from lowering you in her estimation, will conciliate her ; a way by which you will appear to merit forgiveness, which will even restore to you some of that charm which made you so attractive to her before marriage.

But does there exist a policy which can effect all this ?

Most certainly there does.

But how skilful, how tactful, how clever an actor must a husband be if he would be successful in his use of the riches of the mimic treasure we are about to put at his disposal. Fully to act up to the passion which is now to be attributed to him requires all the sagacity of a Talma.

That passion is jealousy.

' My husband is jealous. He has been jealous from the very beginning of our marriage. He has hidden his

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jealousy from me out of consideration for my feelings. He must still love me then ?—I shall be able to manage him after all !’

Such are the discoveries a woman should be induced to make one by one after each delightful scene of the comedy you are pleased to play ; and a man of the world must indeed be a fool if he cannot succeed in making a woman believe that which is so flattering to her vanity.

How perfect in its hypocrisy must your conduct be to awaken your wife’s curiosity, to keep her mind for ever occupied with something new, to conduct her through the labyrinth of your thoughts !

O you great actors, I wonder if you can have any idea of the diplomatic reticence, the tactful gestures, the mysterious words, the deceitful glances which one fine evening bring your wife to the point of trying to worm from you the secret of your passion ?

Oh, how you laugh in your sleeve as you look as fierce as a tiger ! O those statements of yours, that are neither false nor true ; the way you work on her capricious mind and lead her to imagine you care for her when you are really endeavouring to secure her by an iron chain !

O the play you act in private, heart responding to heart as it were—a play in which you both congratulate yourselves on certain success !

It is from her that you will learn that you are jealous, that you do not know yourself as well as she knows you, that your wiles have proved quite ineffectual ; it is she who will perhaps defy you.

She will furtively gloat over the superiority that she imagines she now possesses ; you will become exalted in her eyes, for your past conduct will seem perfectly natural to her. Only your suspicions were vain ; if she had wished to betray you, who could have prevented her ?

Then one evening your passion will get the better

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of you, and, on some trifling pretext, you will make a scene, during which, in your anger, the secret of your distress will be torn from you. Thus do you proclaim the new code.

If the woman gets angry, do not be afraid ; your jealousy justifies her anger. She will even recall your harsh measures—in the first place, because she desires thereby to justify her conduct, and secondly because she thinks she will gain a great advantage by posing as a martyr before her friends, and gathering the lovely flowers of pity they throw at her feet. She will then proceed to use her knowledge as a weapon, hoping to entrap you later on.

She sees plainly that her new-found knowledge will greatly enhance the pleasure she hopes to derive in the future from her various infidelities, and she smiles to herself as she thinks of the barriers you have set up around her—for will she not have the pleasure of surmounting them ?

Women understand to a far greater extent than men the art of analysing the two feelings with which they arm themselves against us, or of which they are the victims. They have the instinct of love, because it is their whole existence, and the instinct of jealousy, because it is almost the only means they have of governing men. With them jealousy is a genuine sentiment, for it arises out of the instinct of self-preservation ; it is a matter of life or death. But with men this sentiment, which is almost indefinable, is always a mistake, unless indeed it be used by them as the means to an end.

To be jealous of the woman one loves is to give evidence of a strange lack of reasoning power. Either we are loved or we are not ; and, in either case, jealousy is a passion which is of no use to mankind ; it cannot be accounted for any more than fear ; it may be that jealousy is fear in love. A jealous man does not doubt his wife, he doubts himself.

Jealousy is at once the height of egoism, distorted

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self-respect and sham vanity. Women foster this ridiculous sentiment with remarkable assiduity, probably because to its existence they owe their dress-money and their diamonds, and because it is as it were a kind of thermometer by which they can measure their power over you. If you do not seem to be entirely blinded by jealousy your wife will keep on her guard, for there is one snare, and one only, about which she has no misgivings whatever, and that is the snare she is setting for herself.

Thus a woman may easily be made the dupe of her husband, provided he has wit enough to conduct the revolution that is bound to come, sooner or later, on those wise lines that we have just laid down.

You will introduce into your house a state of affairs similar to that singular phenomenon in geometry—the asymptotes of a hyperbola. Your wife will approach nearer and nearer to ‘minotaurising’ you, but never quite succeed. Just as a knot seems to become tighter immediately we try to loosen it, so will your wife be putting herself more and more into your power, when all the time she is under the impression that she is winning her independence.

A prince never displays finer genius than when he persuades his people that he is fighting for them, while in reality it is they who are giving their lives to save his throne.

But many husbands may experience difficulties in the earlier stages of this campaign. If the wife’s powers of dissimulation are very great, they may well ask what are the signs by which they are to recognise the exact moment at which she sees through their prolonged mystification.

First of all we may remark that, in the meditations on the Custom-house and the Theory of the Bed, we have already described several of the ways in which a woman’s mind may be fathomed ; but we do not in this book pretend entirely to exhaust the manifold resources of the human mind. In addition to this we might

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remark that the Romans used to find out more about their slaves in ten minutes on the day of the Saturnalia than they could have learned during the whole of the rest of the year ! You must endeavour to institute a kind of Saturnalia within your house, and follow the example of Gessler, who, when he saw William Tell shoot the apple off his son's head, said to himself (or, at all events ought to have done so), ' I must get rid of that man, for if he wanted to kill me, and shot at me, he would be certain not to miss.'

Let it be understood, then, that if your wife wishes to drink the wine of Roussillon, to eat mutton chops, to go out at all hours of the day, and to read the *Encyclopædia*, you must encourage her as strongly as you possibly can. She will then out of perversity proceed to do what she does *not* wish to do, especially when she sees you behaving in a manner so entirely unusual to you. She will imagine that this change of policy is anything but a disinterested one, and the liberty you allow her will therefore only worry her to the extent of preventing her from enjoying it. As for the unhappiness that may follow in the wake of this change, that must be left for the future to provide for. In a revolution the first thing of all to do is to try to direct an evil which you cannot prevent, to attract the lightning by means of a conductor and lead it down into a well.

At length, the last act of the comedy is at hand.

The lover who, from the time of the appearance of the slightest of the first symptoms down to the breaking out of the matrimonial revolution, has been hovering near either in the flesh or in the spirit ; **THE LOVER**, I say, has now been beckoned to her side, and has uttered the words : ' I have come.'

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NINETEENTH MEDITATION

THE LOVER.

WE venture to offer for your consideration the following aphorisms. One might despair of the human race, if these sayings had only been written in the year 1830 ; but they give the points of likeness and difference that exist between you, your wife, and a lover so categorically ; they seem to throw so brilliant a light on your policy, and inform you so accurately of the strength of the enemy, that I, the Teacher, entirely cease to lay claim to any feelings of self-esteem I may once have had ; and if, by chance, there happens to be one stray new thought in what follows, put it down to the devil, for it was he who advised me to undertake the book in the first place.

LXV. To speak of love is to make love.

LXVI. In a lover the most vulgar desire has the appearance of a genuine passion.

LXVII. A lover has all the qualities and all the faults that are lacking in a husband.

LXVIII. Not only does a lover give life to everything, but he makes one forget life : a husband gives life to nothing at all.

LXIX. Woman's little affectations invariably impose on a lover, and a lover goes into ecstasies over things at which a husband merely shrugs his shoulders.

LXX. A lover by his manner alone betrays the degree of his intimacy with a married woman.

LXXI. A woman does not always know why she loves. A man's love is seldom entirely disinterested.

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A husband should endeavour to find out this secret egoistic reason, for the discovery will serve as a veritable Archimedean lever.

LXXII. A wise husband never shows that he suspects his wife of having a lover.

LXXIII. A lover panders to a woman's slightest whim, and as a man is never vile in the arms of his mistress, he will adopt methods of pleasing her such as would disgust a husband.

LXXIV. A lover tells a woman all that a husband hides from her.

LXXV. A woman and her lover exchange feelings ; the lover returns her feelings with interest, and she is rich in what she has given, rich in what she has received. Husbands spend all the feelings they have, and in the end become bankrupts.

LXXVI. A lover only tells a woman that which may raise her self-esteem ; a husband, even a loving husband, can never refrain from giving advice, and he always conveys with it an idea of reproach.

LXXVII. A lover always thinks of his mistress before himself ; with husbands the reverse is the case.

LXXVIII. A lover desires always to appear amiable. There is an element of exaggeration about this characteristic which borders on the ridiculous ; a husband should take advantage of it.

LXXIX. When a crime has been committed, the examining magistrate knows that there are not more than five people to whom he can attribute it—providing we leave out of consideration the case of a discharged convict who has committed a murder in prison. The magistrate makes this knowledge the basis of his conjectures. Now a husband ought to reason on similar lines : when he wishes to discover who is his wife's lover, there

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ought not to be more than one man on whom his suspicions may rest.

LXXX. A lover can do no wrong.

LXXXI. A woman's lover comes to her and says : ' Madam, you need rest. You have to set an example of virtue to your children. You have sworn to minister to the happiness of your husband, who, except for one or two faults (and I have many more than he has), is quite worthy of your regard. Well, you must sacrifice your family or your life to me, because I have discovered that you have a well-shaped leg. You are not to suffer a single sigh to escape you ; for regret is an offence to me, and I should punish you for it more severely than the law punishes wives guilty of adultery. As a reward for all these sacrifices, I bring you as much pleasure as pain.' Is it not almost incredible that there should ever be such a thing as a triumphant lover ! . . . The manner and style of his conversation cannot be surpassed. His vocabulary consists of but two words, and they are for ever on his lips : ' I love.' A lover is a herald who proclaims a woman's merits, her beauty, or her wit. What does a husband proclaim ?

After all, the love that a married woman inspires, or feels, is of all sentiments the least flattering to her lover and to herself : with her it is an excess of vanity, with her lover pure egoism. The lover of a married woman contracts so many obligations that it would be difficult to meet with three men in a century willing to undertake to free him from them ; for the time being he has to devote all his energies to his mistress, and in the end he always abandons her ; they are both aware of this, the woman no less than the man, and as long as the world has existed her behaviour has always been as sublime as his has been ungrateful. A grand passion sometimes excites the pity of those who condemn it. But how often does one come across

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true and lasting passion ? How extraordinary are the powers needed by a husband if he is successfully to combat a man whose prestige alone induces a woman to submit to such miseries !

We consider that as a general rule a husband, if he knows at all how to make use of the means of defence already indicated, may see his wife arrive at the age of twenty-seven not only without her having committed the great crime, but even without her having chosen a lover. Here and there one meets with men with a profound genius for married life who have succeeded in keeping their wives, body and soul, to themselves up to the age of thirty or thirty-five ; but these exceptional cases almost create a scandal, and are looked upon with a kind of horror. This phenomenon presents itself only in the country, where the husband has an immense power ; for life in the country is transparent, and the houses there are made of glass. The miraculous assistance which is there given to a husband always disappears in towns where the population is upwards of two hundred and fifty thousand.

We have therefore practically proved that the age of thirty is the age of virtue. At this critical time of life a woman becomes so difficult to guard, that if her husband would keep her for ever fast bound in a paradise of conjugal bliss, he must have recourse to the last means of defence that remain for us to describe ; these will be revealed in the essays on ' Policy,' on the ' Art of Returning Home,' and on ' Catastrophes.'

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TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

AN ESSAY ON 'POLICY.'

'POLICY' in marriage consists of taking advantage of all opportunities offered by the laws, by the system of our morals, by force, and by cunning, for preventing your wife from doing the three things that practically constitute the life of love : writing to her lover, seeing him, speaking to him.

'Policy' has been treated of to a certain extent in several of the preceding meditations. Instinct alone can tell you which of the various plans should be adopted on any particular occasion. The whole system is elastic ; a skilful husband will easily see how it may be bent, stretched, or compressed. By the aid of 'policy' a man may keep his wife free from blemish up to the age of forty.

We will divide this treatise into five parts :

- I. Mousetraps.
- II. The Interchange of letters.
- III. Spies.
- IV. The Expurgatory Index.
- V. The Budget.

I.—MOUSETRAPS.

Notwithstanding the gravity of the husband's situation, we are not to suppose that the lover has yet acquired full freedom of the city of man and wife. Many husbands are often uncertain as to whether their wives have lovers or not ; they do not know on which of the five or six elect, of whom we have spoken, to fasten their suspicions. This hesitation doubtless proceeds from some moral infirmity, or shows the husband to be in need of help from the ' Professor.'

AN ESSAY ON ' POLICY '

Fouché had at his disposal three or four houses in Paris which men of great distinction were in the habit of visiting. The mistresses of these houses were devoted to him ; their devotion, by the way, cost the State very considerable sums of money. The Minister used to call these societies his mousetraps, but none of the members had any suspicions of them. More than one man was arrested at the moment of departure from a ball, at which the most brilliant company in Paris had been acting without knowing it as Fouché's accomplices.

The art of baiting a trap with morsels of roast chestnut in order that you may watch your wife slowly advance her white hand into it is one that is surrounded with many difficulties, for a woman is sure to be always on her guard ; yet we may reckon that there are at least three kinds of mousetraps : The Irresistible, the Deceitful, and the Expansion Trap.

THE IRRESISTIBLE.

We will imagine that there are two husbands, A. and B., who wish to find out who are their wives' lovers. We will place husband A. at the head of a table loaded with pyramids of beautiful fruits, with cut-glass, sweetmeats, and liqueurs, and husband B. at some other place at the table.

The champagne has gone round several times ; eyes are sparkling and tongues wagging.

HUSBAND A. [*peeling a chestnut*] : For my part I admire men of letters, but only at a distance ; I find them unbearable as companions, for their conversation is so very arrogant. I do not know which upset me the most, their faults or their good qualities, for it seems to me that the superiority of their minds only serves to throw their other qualities into stronger relief. To put it shortly, [*here he swallows the chestnut*] men of genius are cordials if you like, but they must be taken in moderation.

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WIFE B. [*who has been listening attentively*]: But surely, Mr. A., you are very difficult to please! [*She smiles maliciously.*] It seems to me that fools have just as many faults as men of genius; the only difference is that one does not forgive them in fools.

HUSBAND A. [*nettled*]: I think, madam, that you at least agree that they are hardly what one might call amiable companions.

WIFE B. [*quickly*]: How do you know they are not?

HUSBAND A. [*smiling*]: Don't they overwhelm you with their airs of superiority? And besides, vanity is so strong an element in their natures that between the two of you it——

THE MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE [*aside to Wife B.*]: You brought it on yourself, my dear.

(Wife B. shrugs her shoulders.)

HUSBAND A. [*continuing*]: Again, their habit of theorising seems to reveal the inner workings of the feelings; to them love is a purely physical matter, and we know quite well that they do not shine——

WIFE B. [*biting her lips and interrupting*]: It seems to me, Mr. A., that we alone can judge of that. But I can see that men of the world have no love for men of letters! Anyhow it is easier for you to criticise than to imitate them.

HUSBAND A. [*with disdain*]: My dear lady, men of the world may surely attack the authors of their day without being accused of envy. If a man of fashion were to write——

WIFE B. [*with heat*]: Unfortunately for you, some of your friends of the *Chambre* have written novels. Have you ever been able to get through them? Truly, nowadays, if one wants to discover anything like a new idea, one must go in for historical research.

HUSBAND B. [*to himself, leaving a remark made by his neighbour unanswered*]: Oh, oh! so Monsieur de L. (the

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author of *Rêves d'une Jeune Fille*) is the object of my wife's love, is he ! That's curious ; I thought it was Doctor M. Let us see. [*Aloud*] : Do you know, my dear, you are quite right in what you say. [*With a laugh*] : I would rather see artists and men of letters in my drawing-room—[*Aside* : When we receive !]—than men of other professions. Artists, at least, do discuss things that are within everybody's powers of comprehension ; for who considers himself incapable of talking on the subject of beauty ? But as for lawyers, and especially doctors, I confess that to hear them for ever discussing lawsuits or disease, the two infirmities of mankind which——

WIFE B. [*turning from her neighbour to reply to her husband*] : Doctors are quite unbearable !

WIFE A. [*the neighbour of Husband B., speaking at the same time*] : What is that you are saying ? You are under a very curious misapprehension. No one desires to appear as he really is, and I must say, with regard to doctors (seeing that you have mentioned them), that, so far as I have observed, they carefully refrain from talking about their profession. They talk instead on politics, on the fashions, the theatre ; they tell anecdotes, and they write books better than literary men themselves, and the doctor of to-day is a very different person from the doctor of Molière.

HUSBAND A. [*aside*] : Good heavens ! is my wife in love with Doctor M. ? That's strange. [*Aloud*] : That is very possible, my dear, but I would not place even my dog under the care of a doctor who was in the habit of writing books.

WIFE A. [*interrupting her husband*] : You do them injustice. I have known men of five or six professions, in whom the government seemed to have plenty of confidence ; besides, it is curious that *you* should say such things, seeing how much you think of Doctor M.

HUSBAND A. [*aside*] : She is in love with him for certain !

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THE DECEITFUL.

A HUSBAND [*returning home*]: My dear, Madame de Fischtaminel has invited us to a concert she is giving next Tuesday. I had thought of going to it in order to speak to a young cousin of the minister who was to have sung; but he has gone on a visit to his aunt at Frouville. What do you think of doing?

HIS WIFE: Concerts bore me to death. You have to sit nailed to a chair for hours together without saying a word. . . . Besides, you know perfectly well that we are dining with mother on that day. Surely we ought to wish her many happy returns of the day.

THE HUSBAND [*carelessly*]: Ah! that's true.

Three Days Later.

THE HUSBAND [*going to bed*]: I don't think I have told you, my darling; to-morrow I think of leaving you at your mother's and going on to the concert, because the Count has come back from Frouville, and will be there after all.

HIS WIFE [*eagerly*]: But why go all by yourself? And I so fond of music, too.

THE EXPANSION TRAP.

THE WIFE: Why are you going out so early to-night?

THE HUSBAND [*with an air of mystery*]: Ah! my dear, on such painful business that I do not really know how I am going to get through it.

THE WIFE: What is it, Adolphe? It is too bad of you not to tell me.

THE HUSBAND: Well, my dear, if you must know, that mad-cap Prosper Magnan is fighting a duel with Monsieur de Fontanges about some opera-girl or other. Why, what's the matter?

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THE WIFE : Nothing.—Isn't it very hot in here ? I don't know how it is, but my face has been burning all day to-day.

THE HUSBAND [*aside*] : She's in love with Monsieur de Fontanges. [*Aloud*] : Célestine, come here at once ! your mistress is not well !

You will easily see that an intelligent husband can think of a thousand ways of setting these three kinds of traps.

II.—ON THE INTERCHANGE OF LETTERS.

To write a letter and post it ; to receive a reply, and burn it ;—there you have the whole art of correspondence in its simplest terms.

Let us pass under review the various opportunities afforded by civilisation, custom, and even love itself, to a woman who wishes to hide these simple acts from her husband.

First of all there is the relentless pillar-box, which stands open-mouthed for all comers, and takes its food from all hands.

Then there are those fatal places to which letters may be directed and left till called for.

Then again a husband may find a hundred charitable people in the world—men as well as women—who, in return for a similar favour, will slip the little note into their beautiful mistress's loving and ready hand.

Correspondence is a veritable Proteus. There is such a thing as sympathetic ink, and a young bachelor once confided to me that on one occasion he wrote a letter on the white paper cover of a new book, which eventually, on its being taken out of the library by the husband, found its way into the hands of his mistress, who had been told of his splendid idea only the day before.

The wife who is in love with some one else and fears that her husband is jealous, will write and read

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her love-letters in the time that she keeps sacred to those mysterious occupations to which even the most tyrannical of husbands is obliged to leave her free.

Lovers can always arrange a method of telegraphic communication, whereby they employ strange signals which are very hard to fathom. Practically anything can be made to serve as an exchange of confidences ; at a ball, a flower worn in the hair in an unusual fashion ; at the theatre, a handkerchief spread out on the front of the box, an itching in the nose, the colour of a belt, the putting on or the removal of a hat, the wearing of one dress more than another, the singing of a particular ballad at a concert, or the striking of some special notes on the piano, gazing fixedly at some spot that has been agreed upon beforehand—anything, in fact, from a barrel-organ that plays under your window and passes on when you lift the blind, to an announcement in the paper of a horse for sale. Even you yourself may be used as a sign by the lovers. For how many times has not a woman in her artfulness asked her husband to do something or other for her, such as to go to some shop, or to a certain house, when she has previously informed her lover that if the husband comes to such-and-such a place it means ‘ yes,’ or ‘ no ’ ?

I am ashamed to have to confess that in cases of this kind there are no means of preventing the lovers from carrying on a correspondence. But a husband’s powers of diplomacy may gain more strength from this period of comparative helplessness than ever they did from any coercive measures.

The agreement originally made between husband and wife that the seals of their respective letters should be respected ought religiously to be observed. It is a wise husband that lays down this principle at the beginning of married life, and keeps to it conscientiously.

In allowing your wife unlimited freedom as to the writing and receiving of letters, you procure the

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means of finding out when she corresponds with her lover.

But supposing that your wife mistrusts you, and conceals in impenetrable shadows her methods of keeping her letters from you, ought you not at such a time to begin to draw on the intellectual strength with which we have supplied you in the meditation on the Custom-house? The man who does not know when his wife has written to her lover, or when she has received a reply from him, is far from being a perfect husband.

The careful study that it will be necessary for you to make of your wife's movements, actions, gestures, looks, may prove troublesome and wearying, but it need not be pursued for long; for after all it is only a question of discovering when your wife and her lover correspond, and how they manage to do it.

We cannot believe that a husband, even if he be possessed of only moderate intelligence, will fail to see through this feminine manoeuvre when once his suspicions have been aroused.

The following anecdote may help you to realise what opportunities for 'policy' and repression are afforded by clandestine correspondence.

A young lawyer, whose violent passion had led to his becoming acquainted with some of the sacred principles laid down in this important section of our book, had married a young girl who loved him but feebly in return (yet even that he considered a very great favour); and at the end of a year he noticed that his dear Anna (she went by the name of Anna) was in love with a stockbroker's clerk.

Adolphe was a man of about five-and-twenty, with a pretty figure, and, like all bachelors, very much given to enjoying himself. He was thrifty, neat, kind-hearted, a good rider, and a witty talker, and he had a very fine head of black hair, in curling which he took great pains; his whole appearance was by no

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means devoid of elegance—in fact, he would not have disgraced a duchess. The lawyer was ugly, short, thick-set, square-shouldered, mean-looking, and—her husband ! Anna was tall and beautiful, with almond-shaped eyes, a fair white skin, and delicate features. She was the personification of love, and her face, when she was overcome with passion, would light up in the most wonderful way. She came of a poor family ; and young M. Lebrun had only 12,000 francs a year. We have said enough. One evening Lebrun came home looking careworn. He went into his study and attempted to do some work, but soon joined his wife, shivering ; and not long after he went to bed in a state of high fever. He groaned as he thought of his clients, especially of a poor widow whose fortune he was endeavouring to save. A meeting had been arranged for the next day with some business men to see what could be done in the matter of an adjustment, and now here he was lying in bed unable to be present at it. After sleeping for about a quarter of an hour he woke up, and in a feeble voice begged his wife to write to one of his intimate friends, and ask him to take his place at the meeting on the next day. He dictated a long letter, carefully noting how much paper his words were taking up. When one sheet had been filled he handed his wife a fresh one, and proceeded to describe to the friend the joy that his client would feel if the adjustment were made—the fateful page began with the words :—

‘ My dear friend, go immediately to Madame de Vernon ; she will be impatiently expecting you. Her address is No. 7, Rue du Sentier. Forgive me for not giving you any further particulars. I rely on your good sense to divine that which I am unable to explain.—*Tout-à-vous.*’

‘ Give me the letter,’ said the lawyer ; ‘ I must see if there are any mistakes in it before I sign it.’

The unfortunate woman, who had allowed her pru-

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dence to slumber while her husband had been dictating the most outlandish law-terms, handed him the letter. As soon as Lebrun got hold of it, he began to wriggle about and moan, and then he asked his wife to go and bring him something. She was not out of the room for more than two minutes, but in that time the lawyer had jumped out of bed, folded a piece of paper in the form of a letter, and hidden that which his wife had just written. When Anna came back, the artful husband sealed the blank sheet, and got his wife to address it to the friend for whom the purloined letter had been intended, and the poor creature gave the candid message to a servant, with directions for it to be posted at once. Lebrun now grew perceptibly calmer; he slept—or at any rate pretended to sleep; but on the morning of the next day he still seemed to be suffering from the same indefinable pains. Two days later he took the second sheet of the original letter, put an 'e' on the end of the word 'tout' in the phrase 'tout-à-vous,' folded the seemingly innocent paper in a mysterious fashion, sealed it, left the nuptial chamber, called the maid and said to her: 'Madame wishes you to take this to Monsieur Adolphe as quickly as you can.'

He waited until the maid had gone, and then, saying that he had an appointment to keep, immediately went off to the Rue du Sentier, to the address given in the letter. At the house of a friend who was a party to the plot he calmly awaited the coming of his rival. The lover, beside himself with joy, hurried to the house and asked for Madame de Vernon—he entered the room, and found himself face to face with Lebrun, calm and pale, with quiet, relentless eyes.

'Sir,' said he in an agitated voice to the young clerk, whose heart was by this time beating wildly, 'you love my wife, and you are trying to make yourself agreeable to her; I ought to bear you no malice, for at your age I should have done the same. But Anna is in despair; you have destroyed her peace of mind, and

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raised a hell in her heart. She has confided everything to me. She was goaded into writing the note you received by a quarrel that we had had (we were soon reconciled), and she has sent me here in her place. I need not tell you, sir, that in persisting in your attentions you are causing unhappiness to her whom you love, you are doing your best to destroy my respect for her, and sooner or later to forfeit your own; and that your misdeeds will be handed down from generation to generation, to the misery of my children. Nor need I speak of the bitterness you are bringing into my life;—all this is, unfortunately, an old and well-known story! . . . But I assure you, sir, that the first false step you take will be the signal for a gruesome crime—I shall not wait for a duel to pierce you to the heart!’

At these words, the eyes of the lawyer sent the chill of death to the young man’s heart.

‘Now, sir,’ he continued in gentler tones, ‘you are young, and you have a generous heart; sacrifice yourself for the happiness of the woman you love—make up your mind to leave her, and see her no more. And if you cannot possibly do without some one of the family, there is a young aunt of mine who is not yet “settled” in life; she is a charming woman, full of life and gaiety, and, what is more, rich; go and try your fortune with her, and leave a virtuous woman in peace.’ This mixture of terrorising and banter on the part of the husband, together with his piercing eyes and his deep voice, made a very great impression on the lover. He was at first dumbfounded, like a man whom some violent shock has deprived of presence of mind. If Anna had lovers after this (a purely imaginary supposition), Adolphe was certainly no longer amongst their number.

This anecdote may serve to show that correspondence is as it were a two-edged sword—it may be used as much as a means of defence for the husband as an aid in the committing of indiscretions to the wife. You should therefore be favourably disposed

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towards the interchange of letters, just as the Prefect of Police is careful to light the streets of Paris with lamps.

III.—SPIES.

To take servants into one's confidence, and to ask them for information, cannot be looked upon as exactly a crime ; it may be mean—it is certainly foolish ; for you have no guarantee that the servant who betrays his mistress is honest, and you can never be really sure whether he is acting in her interests or your own. There can be no two opinions on this point.

Nature, like the kind and loving parent that she is, has placed by a mother's side spies that are more watchful than any other spies in the world could be, while, at the same time, they are truthful and extremely discreet. They are dumb and yet they speak ; they see all while seeming to see nothing.

I met a friend of mine on the boulevard one day, and, on his inviting me to dine with him, we went along together.

His family were already seated at the dinner-table, and the mistress of the house was serving her two daughters with some soup. 'My "first symptoms,"' said I to myself. We took our seats. The first words uttered by the husband, who was entirely devoid of tact, and who only spoke when he had nothing better to do, were : 'Has any one called to-day ?'

'Not even a cat !' answered his wife, without looking at him.

Never shall I forget the looks the two little girls darted at their mother. The look of the elder one, who was eight years old, was especially significant. In it were expressed at one and the same time revelation and mystery, curiosity and silence, astonishment and fearlessness. What was if anything more remarkable than the speed with which the candid beam shot from their eyes was the prudence with which both as it were

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pulled down the blinds, and veiled their eyes with their drooping white lids.

Ye gentle, charming creatures, who, from the age of nine to the age at which you marry, are often a torment to your mothers, even if she be not given to flirting,—is it by instinct, or because of some special gift, that your ears catch the tone of a man's voice, however low, through walls and doors; that your young eyes see everything, that your young minds take in all you hear, even to the meaning of an idle word or the significance of a little gesture of your mother's?

The predilection fathers have for their daughters, and mothers for their sons, arises from instinctive feelings of gratitude.

But the art of turning the commonest objects of life into spies is as easy as child's-play; it ought not to be difficult to light upon a better plan than that of the beadle who took it into his head to put egg-shells into his bed, and who received no more satisfaction from his amazed help-mate than the remark, 'You ought not to have pounded them so thoroughly!'

La Popelinière got very little consolation from the Maréchal de Saxe, when they both discovered the famous revolving chimney invented by the Duc de Richelieu: 'That is the finest "*ouvrage à cornes*" I have ever seen!' cried the hero of Fontenoy.

We trust that your system of espionage will not introduce you to anything so unpleasant. Miseries such as these are the fruit of civil war, and we have not yet come to that.

IV.—THE EXPURGATORY INDEX.

The Pope places only books on the Expurgatory Index; you will have to brand both men and things with the marks of your disapproval.

You must make a rule that your wife is never to have a bath anywhere but in her own house;

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That her lover is not to visit her, nor indeed any one who takes an interest in their love ;

That she is never to go for a walk without you.

But every household has its own little peculiarities, which vary according to the different characteristics of its members, and these and the difficulties arising from their passion and their individual tastes and habits are the cause of so many alterations in this 'Black Book,' multiplying or effacing the lines in it so quickly, that it was once described by a friend of mine as the 'History of the Vicissitudes of the Conjugal Church.'

Life in the country and daily walks are the only two things for which definite rules can be laid down.

A husband should, as a general rule, never take his wife into the country, nor allow her to go there by herself. Let him have a country house of his own if he likes, and invite only ladies or old men to it, and never leave his wife for a minute alone. To take her, if only for half a day, to some one else's house, is to be as fatuous as an ostrich !

To begin with it is extremely difficult to keep watch over a woman in the country, for how can you possibly, at one and the same time, be at all the thickets, climbing all the trees, pursuing a lover's track over grass which may be down-trodden at night, but will certainly pick up with the morning dew, and glisten in the early rays of the sun ? How can you have an eye for every gap in the park walls ? The country and the spring-time ! are they not a bachelor's right hand ?

When a woman's married life has reached a critical stage, the husband must either stay in town until war breaks out, or else give up his whole existence to the joys of a cruel system of espionage.

Then again as regards the daily walk. If Madame wishes to go to a party, to the theatre, to the Bois de Boulogne, to buy a dress, or to look at the fashions, then Madame must go in the company of

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her honoured lord and master. If she should seize upon an occasion when his time is entirely taken up with something to which he must attend, and try to surprise him into allowing her to go on some expedition upon which she has set her heart; if she should use every charm in her possession to coax him into letting her go (he ought to be well enough acquainted with her powers of fascination), then I advise him to let her charm him, to sell the commission for a high price, and above all to endeavour to convince the creature whose soul is now weak as water, now hard as steel, that the importance of the work he has on hand entirely prevents him from leaving his study.

As soon as ever his wife has set foot in the street, he must immediately be on her track, and not let her go so many as fifty yards by herself. He should follow quietly, taking good care that she does not catch sight of him.

Here and there one may come across a Werther whose tender, loving soul would revolt at such a practice. But a husband is no more to be blamed for such conduct than a farmer who gets up in the middle of the night to keep watch over the peaches on his walls. He may be fortunate enough to get to know (before any actual misdeed has been committed) the exact locality of those rooms so many lovers hire in town under an assumed name. If by any chance (and may God guard him from it) his wife should enter a house of which he has suspicions, he must find out whether it has more than one exit.

Again, what has he to fear if his wife takes a cab? Has not the Prefect of Police, on whom all husbands ought to bestow a crown of gold, built at every cab-rank a little lodge, where, note-book in hand, sits the incorruptible guardian of our public morals? Does he not know whither every one of those Parisian gondolas is bound, and whence it comes?

If his wife is in the habit of doing her own shopping,

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he should make it a fixed rule always to accompany her on her visits to the tradespeople, and to notice carefully whether she is on any terms of familiarity with her haberdasher, her draper, or her dressmaker. He should then apply the rules of the Conjugal Custom-house, and draw his own conclusions.

If in his absence his wife should happen to have gone out in spite of his commands, leaving word that she has gone to such-and-such a place, or to such-and-such a shop, he should go there on the next day and find out if she has told him the truth.

But his own feelings will suggest ways of exercising his tyranny better than this meditation can, and we will therefore bring these minute directions to a conclusion.

V.—THE BUDGET.

To all husbands desirous of maintaining a really strong position (see the meditation on the ' Fore-ordained '), we would offer the following advice—carefully keep from your wives the actual amount of your income.

In urging you to establish your financial system on this basis we hope to do something towards counter-acting the opinion, which is a fairly general one, that the management of the money should not be put into the wife's hands. It is a popular error which is the cause of many misunderstandings between married people.

We will at first treat the subject not as a matter of money, but as a matter concerning the heart.

There seems to me to be something very small, not to say shabby and depressing, in the drawing up of a little account for household expenses, and doling out to your wife a twelfth of a certain fixed sum every month. Such a practice can be really suitable only for the sordid or the distrustful, and in acting in that manner you will lay up countless troubles for yourself in the future. I am fully aware that, during the first years of your honey-sweet union, scenes of a more or less pleasing

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nature—witty little jokes, elegant purses, and gentle caresses—may accompany and adorn the monthly present ; but a time will come when your wife has thoughtlessly squandered your money, and is compelled to beg a loan from the ‘Chambre.’ I imagine that, without selling it too dear, you will grant the bill of indemnity to an accompaniment of fine speeches, in the inimitable manner of our faithless deputies. They pay, but they grumble ; you pay, and make compliments. Well and good !

But in the present crisis, one drawing made on the yearly budget before it falls due will not suffice. There is an accumulation of bills for fichus, hats, and dresses ; there are small expenses on account of evening parties, of diplomatic express-messengers, and of love’s general stock-in-trade ; while your receipts, of course, remain the same.

Then begins the most odious course of education that it is possible for a woman to undergo. I know quite well that there are to be met with here and there a few noble and generous souls, who rank purity of heart and freedom of soul far higher than the common herd ranks them, and who would forgive passion a thousand times sooner than they would a lie, who, in their delicacy, instinctively divine the principles that underlie this plague of the soul—this last stage of human corruption.

Love scenes of the most delightful description are now enacted. Now is the wife compliant in all things ; and, like some brilliant harp-string that has been cast in front of the fire, she winds herself round you, clasps you, embraces you ; she gives way to all your unreasonablenesses ; never before has she talked to you so lovingly ; she lavishes endearments—or rather she sells them ; and she ends by falling lower than an Opera-girl. Money is in her sweetest kisses, in her every word. Engrossed as she is over the business, her heart becomes a lump of lead. The most expert

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and cunning usurer does not gauge the money-value of a son of a family, for whom he puts his signature to a note of hand, with greater accuracy than that with which your wife makes an estimate of any single one of your desires, as she jumps from branch to branch like a squirrel in fear of his life, trying her utmost to increase her store of money by increasing your desires. Nor must you think you will be indifferent to her seductions. Nature has bestowed on women a perfect treasure-mine of attractions, and society has increased these riches tenfold by its fashions, its clothes, its embroideries and its pelerines.

'If I marry,' said one of the greatest generals of our army, 'I shall not put a halfpenny in the basket——'

'What will you put into it, then, General?' asked a young girl.

'The key of the writing-table.'

The maiden made a little smirk of approval. She gently shook her head, and it quivered like the needle of a compass; then she lifted her chin, as who should say: 'I would willingly marry the General, for all his forty-nine years.'

But to return to the question of money, I would ask you what interest you can expect a woman to take in an arrangement by which she is paid as if she were no better than a housekeeper.

Let us now consider the other system.

In handing over say two-thirds of your income to your wife, under a show of absolute confidence, you win her everlasting esteem; for confidence and generosity always awaken responsive echoes in a woman's heart. Madame will be burdened with a responsibility which as often as not will be the cause of her neglecting the usual dissipations of society—all the more effectually in that she will have taken up the burden of her own accord. All that you have done is to insure against fire, and you can rest assured that in the future your wife will not disgrace herself—perhaps, ever!

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Now, as a means of defence, what admirable resources this system of finance affords you.

You will have in your household an exact 'quotation' of your wife's morality, just as the quotations on the Stock Exchange are a measure of the confidence that is, for the time being, placed in the Government. In fact, during the first years of your married life, your wife will pride herself on giving you full satisfaction for your money.

You will find that she will provide lavishly, she will add to the furniture, and the carriages; she will always have a sum of ready money in a drawer, which is kept sacred to her beloved. As a matter of fact, the drawer will very often be empty, for the husband spends a great deal too much himself. The economies prescribed by the 'Chambre' fall only on the clerk, who has no more than twelve hundred francs a year—but what I maintain is that you should act exactly as though you were such a clerk. I dare say you will laugh at this—for no doubt you have for many a long year been saving a third of your income; putting apart a little store 'for a rainy day,' as Louis XV. used to say he did.

If your wife begins to talk of economy, her words will be equivalent to the variations in the quotations of the money market. These financial quotations will enable you to gauge with great accuracy the progress a lover is making, and to gain a knowledge of all that is going on. *E sempre bene.*

Supposing your wife does not fully appreciate the confidence you have placed in her, and one day chooses to squander a considerable amount of the money entrusted to her? Well, in the first place, however extravagant she may be, she will hardly be able to spend a third of the amount earned by you in the last ten years; and, further, on referring to the meditation on 'Catastrophes,' you will find that the very crisis in which your life's follies culminate will afford you splendid opportunities for killing the 'minotaur.'

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The secret fortune that you have amassed need only be brought to light at your death ; and if you have to draw on it to help your wife out of a difficulty it will simply be thought that you have been lucky at play, or have borrowed from a friend.

Such are the true principles on which to draw up the matrimonial budget.

Conjugal 'policy,' of course, has its 'annals' of martyrs. We will quote from it in order to show how necessary it is for husbands to keep watch over themselves as well as over their wives.

An old miser, who lived at T—— (a gay town if ever there was one), had married a young and pretty wife, and so smitten was he with her charms, and so jealous, that love triumphed over avarice, and he retired from business in order to keep a better watch over her—with the result that, instead of hoarding money, he hoarded the woman ! I may say that I owe most of the remarks contained in this section (which is doubtless only a very incomplete survey of the matter) to a friend who had the opportunity of studying this strange matrimonial phenomenon ; the following characteristics of the miser will, perhaps, help us to understand his nature when husband and wife were living in the country ; the husband never went to bed without first raking over the paths in his park with a peculiar kind of rake ; and he also kept a special rake for the grass on the terraces. He had made a special study of the footprints of the different members of his household ; and every morning he would go and assign to their owners any marks he might chance to discover.

'All the trees you see are full-grown,' he said to my friend, as he was showing him round the park, 'and there is no undergrowth.'

His wife was enamoured of one of the most charming young men of the town. For no less than nine

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years passion had burned in the hearts of these two lovers ; their fate had been decided at first sight, in a crowded ballroom ; as they danced together their trembling hands, gloved though they were, had revealed to them the depth of their love for one another. From that day onwards they had to be content with little nothings such as more favoured lovers despise. One day, with an air of mystery, the young man led a friend, who was in his confidence, into a boudoir, where, under a glass case that stood on a table, he preserved some flowers that had fallen from his mistress's hair in the whirl of the dance, together with some trumpery leaves from a tree in her park that she had chanced to tread on. He was guarding them as carefully as though they were the most precious jewels in the world. On one of the leaves, which had fallen on clayey soil, the tiny print of the woman's foot could still be seen.

'I could hear,' the friend said to me afterwards, 'his heart beat, as we stood in silence before the treasures of this museum. I raised my eyes to the ceiling, and confided to heaven what I dared not say aloud. "Poor humanity!" thought I.'

'Madame de —— tells me that one evening, at a ball given in her house, you were found half-fainting in the card-room,' I said to him.

'And small wonder if I was,' he replied, trying to conceal the passion that leapt to his eyes. 'I had kissed her arm. But,' he added, squeezing my hand, and giving me a look that seemed to pierce me to the heart, 'her husband has been attacked with gout in the stomach.'

Shortly after this, however, the old miser recovered, and seemed to take a new lease of life ; but one morning during his convalescence he took to his bed again, and died quite suddenly. The dead man's body bore such clear signs of his having been poisoned that an inquest was held, and the lovers were arrested.

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Then occurred, before the Court of Assizes, the most touching scene that has ever moved the heart of a jury. During the cross-examination both the lovers confessed the crime, for they had both made up their minds to the same thing—the woman wished, at all costs, to save her lover, and he to save his mistress. Where justice sought one guilty person, it had found two. The pleading was nothing but a mass of lies, told with all the passion of an avowal of love. The lovers were united for the first time on the criminals' bench, a police officer sitting between them. A unanimous jury, very much affected, found them guilty. Of all those who had the temerity to go and see them led forth to the scaffold, not one can to this day speak of the execution without a shudder. Religion had torn from them an admission of repentance of their crime, but nothing could abjure their love. The scaffold was their marriage couch, and through the long night of death they now sleep together side by side.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

THE ART OF RETURNING HOME.

MANY a husband, being incapable of controlling his burning anxiety, makes the grand mistake of coming home with the idea of triumphing over his wife, after the manner of Spanish bulls, who, when maddened by the red 'banderillo,' will, in their fury, rip open horses, matadors, picadors, toreadors, all who happen to be in the arena.

The really wise husband is he who enters with a gentle, timid air, like Mascarille, who comes in expecting to get a beating, but becomes blithe as a lark as soon as he sees that his master is in a good humour.

'Yes, my dear young friend, I know perfectly well that in my absence you have had every opportunity of

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doing wrong. Another, had she been in your place, would perhaps have thrown the house out of the window, whereas you have only broken a pane ! May God bless you. If you always behave like this, you may be sure of my heartfelt gratitude.'

Some such thoughts as these ought to be suggested in your face and manner ; but, to yourself, you say :—
' I wonder if he has been here to-day ! '

That a man should always look amiable at home is one of the laws of marriage that admits of no exception.

But the art of going out only so as to be able to return just at the right moment, when once you have discovered a plot against your happiness, is one which depends on tact and instinct, and it is impossible for us to draw up any directions on the subject. The vicissitudes of life are ever a surprise, even to the most fertile imagination. We must content ourselves with enriching our book with a tale worthy of being inscribed in the archives of l'Abbaye de Thélème. It should be very useful to you, for it presents a new means of defence, which has been only lightly touched on in the aphorisms, and it points the moral of this meditation most instructively.

Monsieur de B——, an orderly officer, and, for the time, acting secretary to Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland, was quartered at the Château de Saint-Leu, close to Paris, where Queen Hortense held her Court, and whither her ladies-in-waiting had accompanied her. The young officer was a fair, amiable-looking man ; he had an affected, self-satisfied air about him, and seemed a little too much impressed with the fact of his being a soldier ; otherwise a pleasant and witty companion enough. Why he had become, notwithstanding his good qualities, unbearable to the Queen's women, history does not say. It may very well be that he made the great mistake of offering the same homage to all indiscriminately ; but if he did it was really only his artfulness, for, at any rate for the moment, he was madly in love

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with one of their number, and one only—Madame la Comtesse de ——. But she did not dare to defend her lover, for fear of betraying her secret, and, as often happens in such cases, the most biting epigrams were those that fell from her pretty lips, while all the time in her heart she was cherishing the neat little image of the gay young soldier.

There is a certain class of women with which conceited men always get on well, provided they dress well and can show a neat foot. It is composed of women whose manners are affected, but whose natures are delicate and refined. The Comtesse was a woman of this kind, but in her case a strange air of innocence was mingled with her affected manners. She belonged to the family of the N——s, with whom good manners were traditional. Her husband was a son of the old Duchesse de L——, and, along with everybody else, had bowed his head before the idol of the day. Napoleon had only recently made him a Comte, and he flattered himself that before long he would send him on an embassy ; in the meantime he contented himself with the duties of chamberlain, and if he left his wife in the keeping of the Queen, it was because he thought she might further his ambitions.

‘ My son,’ said his mother to him one day, ‘ your wife is taking after the family. She is in love with Monsieur de B——.’

‘ You must be joking, mother : he borrowed a hundred pounds from me only yesterday.’

‘ If you think no more of your wife than of your money, we need not say anything further,’ replied the old lady dryly.

The future ambassador set himself to watch the two lovers, and one day, when playing billiards with the Queen, the officer, and his wife, he was afforded one of those proofs which, however insignificant in themselves, are decisive in the eyes of a diplomatist.

‘ They have gone farther than they realise,’ he said

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to his mother, and poured forth his bitter sorrow to the old Duchesse, who was as wise as she was wily. He loved the Comtesse, and she, without exactly having what one might call principles, had not been married long enough to have lost all sense of the duties which are involved in marriage. The Duchesse undertook to sound her daughter-in-law's heart, thinking she might still redeem her young and delicate soul, and she promised her son that she would in the end destroy Monsieur de B——'s chances, once and for all. One evening, when the card-parties had all broken up, and the ladies were engaged in gossip and scandal, the Comtesse happened to be waiting on the Queen, and Madame de L——, seizing the opportunity, informed the assembly of Monsieur de B——'s secret love for her daughter-in-law. There was a general outcry, and the Duchesse had the pleasure of hearing that, in the opinion of all who were present, the woman who succeeded in driving the officer from the château would be rendering a great service both to the Queen and to her ladies, all of whom had such good cause to hate him. The old lady asked the fair conspirators for their help, which was very readily granted. Within forty-eight hours the artful mother-in-law had become the confidant of both her daughter-in-law and the lover. Three days later, she raised the young officer to the seventh heaven of delight by giving him hopes of a tête-à-tête with his mistress, after luncheon. It was agreed that Monsieur de B—— should start early in the morning for Paris and return secretly. The Queen had announced a boar-hunt for that day, and the Comtesse was obliged to feign indisposition. The Comte had gone to Paris for King Louis, and was thus out of the way. To appreciate the crafty plan of the Duchesse to the full, we ought to explain the arrangement of the small suite of rooms which the Comtesse occupied at the château. It was on the first floor, above the Queen's rooms, and at the end of a long corridor. It really consisted of a bedroom, with a closet on either side of

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it. The one on the right was a dressing-room ; the one on the left had been transformed by the Comtesse into a boudoir. Picture to yourself a boudoir in a country house : this one was practically nothing but four walls. It was hung with grey tapestry, and contained a carpet and a sofa—nothing else ; for it had been furnished in two days. The Duchesse herself only realised the depth of the plot she had laid after the event—circumstances served her admirably. At about eleven o'clock, a nice little luncheon was served in the larger room. The officer had ridden back hard from Paris, spurring his horse's flanks till they ran with blood. On his arrival he handed the noble creature over to a groom, climbed the park walls, tore to the château, and reached the little room without being seen even by a gardener. Orderly officers at that time (in case you should have forgotten) wore very tight close-fitting breeches, and a long, narrow schako ; their costume was well calculated to show them off at a review, but very awkward at a tryst. The old lady had reckoned on the inconveniences of the uniform. They had a merry luncheon. Neither the Comtesse nor her mother drank any wine ; but the officer, who knew the proverb, gaily swallowed as much champagne as was necessary to sharpen his wits and set his love on fire. When the luncheon was over the officer glanced at the mother-in-law ; she, following her rôle as an accomplice, said suddenly : ' Surely I hear carriage-wheels ! ' and left the room. In three minutes she returned, crying : ' It is the Comte ! ' and pushed the two lovers into the boudoir. ' Be perfectly quiet,' she said—' but, for heaven's sake, take your schako ! ' and she reproved the careless fellow with a severe glance as she gave it to him.

She carried the table into the dressing-room herself, and, thanks to the rapidity of her movements, the room was entirely put to rights before her son made his appearance.

' Is my wife ill ? ' he asked.

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‘No,’ replied his mother. ‘She soon recovered from a slight indisposition, and has gone, so far as I know, with the hunting party.’ Then she nodded her head as much as to say : ‘They are in there.’

‘But are you not mad,’ replied the Comte, in suppressed tones, ‘to shut them in together like that?’

‘There is nothing to fear,’ answered the Duchesse. for I put in his wine——’

‘What?’

‘The very strongest of emetics.’

Enter the King of Holland. He had come to ask the Comte what had been the result of his mission. The Duchesse, with one or two hints that women know so well how to let fall, persuaded his Majesty to take the Comte to her house.

As soon as the two lovers were alone in the boudoir the Comtesse, stupefied at hearing her husband’s voice, whispered to the officer : ‘See what I have exposed myself to for your sake!’

‘But, my dear Marie, my love will reward you for all your sacrifices ; I will be faithful unto death.’ (Aside to himself : ‘Oh ! oh ! what pain I am suffering !’)

‘Ah !’ the young woman cried, wringing her hands as she thought she heard her husband walk towards the door of the boudoir, ‘no love of yours can repay me for the agonies I am now enduring ! Don’t come near me, sir !’

‘Oh, my treasure, my beloved,’ said he, as he knelt respectfully at her feet, ‘I will be all to you that you can possibly desire ! See, you have but to command, and I keep my distance. Call me back, and I come to you. I will be as submissive as a lamb—(my God, it must be the colic !)—the most constant of lovers. Oh, my dear, dear Marie. (Ah, I am lost ! I shall die if this goes on !).’

The officer rushed to the window, meaning to jump headlong into the garden ; but he caught sight of the Queen walking below with her ladies. Then, turning

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to the Comtesse, with his hand on the most prominent part of his uniform, he cried, in his despair :—

‘ You must forgive me, Madame, but I cannot stay in this room another minute ! ’

‘ Sir, are you mad ? ’ the young woman cried, now seeing that something else than love was agitating his distorted features.

The officer, crying with rage, quickly bent his head over his schako, which he had thrown into a corner of the room.

‘ Well, Comtesse, ’ said the Queen, as she entered the bedroom, which the King and the Comte had just left, ‘ how do you feel now ?—Why, where is she ? ’

‘ Madame, ’ cried the Comtesse, darting from the boudoir, ‘ don’t go in there !—for the love of heaven, don’t go in there ! ’

Seeing her companions in the room she said no more, but looked at Queen Hortense. The Queen was as indulgent as she was curious, and immediately made a sign for them to retire. That very day the officer left the army, gained the outposts, sought death, and found it. He was a brave man, but surely no philosopher.

It is said that one of our most celebrated artists, having conceived a love for the wife of one of his friends, a love which was returned, also had to undergo all the horrors of a similar situation—for thus did the husband revenge himself ; and, if we are to believe the old chroniclers, his was a double triumph ; but the lovers were wiser in their generation than Monsieur de B——, and, though both stricken with the same infirmity, did not seek death.

The way a husband should behave on returning home depends on many things. Let us take an example :—Lord Catesby was a man of prodigious strength. It happened that one day, when he was returning from a fox-hunt, which he had promised to attend, no doubt with the idea of putting people off

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their guard, he made for a hedge in his park, standing close to which he thought he saw a very fine horse. Being passionately fond of horses, he drew near, so that he might admire this one at close quarters, and caught sight of Lady Catesby. It seemed high time for him to go to her rescue, if he were at all jealous of his honour. He pounced on the man, and quickly put an end to the love-making by seizing him by the waist and throwing him clean over the hedge into the road.

‘Understand, sir, that henceforth you must address yourself to me, if there is anything you wish to know,’ said he, in a rage.

‘Very well, my Lord ; but would you be so kind as to throw my horse over for me as well ?’

Meanwhile the outraged husband had already given his wife his arm, and was saying—

‘You are very much to blame, my dear, for not imagining that I can love you well enough for two. From this day onward I will, every other day, love you for this man—the other days for myself.’

This home-coming is looked upon in England as one of the finest on record. It is certainly true that in Lord Catesby eloquence of action and eloquence of speech were combined in the most happy fashion.

But the guiding principles in the art of returning home are, after all, only additional deductions from that system of courtesy and dissimulation which has been laid down in former meditations, and the exercise of these principles is but a preparation for the matrimonial ‘catastrophes,’ with which we are now about to deal.

ON ' CATASTROPHES '

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

ON ' CATASTROPHES.'

THE word ' catastrophe ' is a literary term for a theatrical effect.

To introduce such an effect into the drama you are playing is to employ a means of defence which is as easy as it is effective. But, while advising you to make use of this device, we do not pretend that you can do so without any danger to yourself. A matrimonial ' catastrophe ' may be likened to attacks of fever, which either carry off a naturally healthy subject, or restore him to perfect health. Thus, when a ' catastrophe ' is brought to a successful termination, it consigns a woman for years to come to the fair fields of virtue.

This ' means ' is the last that has been discovered by Science up to the present time.

The massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Sicilian Vespers, the death of Lucrece, Napoleon's two landings at Fréjus, are all political ' catastrophes.' It is not, it is true, given to us to produce any such appalling ' catastrophes ' as these : but our conjugal *coups de théâtre* need not be any less stirring.

Since the art of creating a situation by which the whole aspect of nature may be changed by seemingly natural causes requires genius—and no man can be taught genius—and, further, since it is one of the most difficult things in the world to bring a woman back to virtue when once she has wandered no matter how small a distance along the gilded paths of vice, the licentiate of conjugal law is here obliged to admit his inability to reduce to fixed principles a science which changes like the wind, is as fleeting as the moment, and as intangible as instinct.

Tousean expression that neither Diderot, d'Alembert,

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nor Voltaire could succeed in introducing into every-day language, notwithstanding its forcibleness—a matrimonial ‘catastrophe’ may be ‘smelt from afar.’

All we can do is to sketch, to the best of our ability, a few analogous cases, following the example of the philosopher of old who, after seeking in vain for an explanation of motion, proceeded to watch himself walk, and so endeavoured to grasp the laws of motion.

In accordance with the rules already laid down in the meditation on ‘Policy,’ a husband will expressly forbid his wife to receive visits from the bachelor whom he suspects of being her lover; and she, of course, must never go to see him. There are certain little domestic scenes which are better left to the imagination; a husband could describe them far more easily than we can, by carrying his thoughts back to those days when the granting of a favour was always repaid by a confidence, and when it was his policy (if he were clever enough) to be at work on several plots at one and the same time.

In order to make the subject more interesting, we will imagine that a husband has found out, by carefully organized surveillance, that his wife, profiting by his absence at a ministerial dinner (to which, by the way, she had perhaps procured him his invitation), has had a visit from Monsieur A. Z., and that you are that husband.

Here we have all the conditions that are needed for one of the finest of ‘catastrophes.’ You should return early enough for your arrival practically to coincide with that of Monsieur A. Z., for we do not advise you to run the risk of a too lengthy ‘entr’acte.’ Do you ask how you are to return?—Well, certainly do not return in accordance with rules laid down in the preceding meditations, and by no means in a fury. Arrive in a right good humour—in a fluster, if you like, because you have forgotten your purse or your notes, your handkerchief or your snuff-box—but certainly in a good

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humour. Either you come upon the two as a surprise, or your wife, warned of your approach by her maid, will have hidden her lover.

We will now proceed carefully to investigate each of these two unique positions.

We would observe, in passing, that all husbands ought to be capable of striking terror into their homes—capable of arranging miniature ' September 2nd's ' for their own benefit.

Thus, from the moment when his wife first displays a ' symptom,' no husband should fail to give her, from time to time, his private opinion of the way in which a husband should behave in a ' crisis.'

' I may as well tell you that, if ever I caught a man on my wife's knees, I would not hesitate to kill him on the spot.'

You should state that : ' A husband, like an ancient Roman, ought by law to have power of life and death over his children, so that he might put to death the children born in adultery.'

These savage utterances do not commit you, but they serve to impress your wife with salutary feelings of terror ; you might even smile as you uttered them : ' Oh, yes, my dear, I could kill you finely. Would you like to be slain by me ? . . . '

No woman will be able to keep free from the fear that one day this jest may become deadly earnest, for love prompts crimes that are practically involuntary ; and women, who know better than any one how to speak a true word in jest, are ready enough to suspect their husbands of employing the same artifice.

If a husband surprises his wife in the company of her lover at a time when they are engaged in a perfectly innocent conversation, her head (still the head of a pure woman, be it observed) ought to produce the same effect as that produced by the celebrated Gorgon of mythology.

To make a successful ' catastrophe ' out of your

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discovery, you have one of three courses open to you, the choice of which depends on your wife's character. Either you play a pathetic part, as Diderot would have done ; or a sarcastic, in the manner of Cicero ; or you seize a loaded pistol and fire it off ; it is wonderful what effects a terrific noise can produce.

A clever husband can easily manufacture a sentimental scene. He enters, sees the lover, and, with a single glance, drives him away. The bachelor gone, he falls at his wife's feet, and delivers a tirade, more or less in the following style :

' Well, my dear Caroline ; so I have not properly understood how to love you ! '

Then they both fall to weeping, and the whole affair is a great success.

In the event of the ' catastrophe ' beginning with the bachelor hidden in a cupboard, two courses are open to you, the choice of which depends upon the strength of your wife's mind. The ' catastrophe ' will be a finer one if, by good luck, the bachelor has been concealed just before you come in.

Provided the room has been arranged after the manner described in the Fourteenth Meditation, you can easily detect the lover's hiding-place, even though, like Byron's Don Juan, he be rolled up beneath a sofa-cushion. If the room happens to be in disorder, you can still find out what you want to know easily enough, for there is probably not more than one place in the room where a man could possibly hide.

But if, by some devilish art, he has made himself so small that he has slipped into a place you would never have thought of (one must be prepared for everything), then, either your wife will be unable to keep her eyes off the spot, or she will pretend to cast anxious glances in the opposite direction, in which case nothing is easier than the setting of a little trap.

Having discovered the hiding-place, walk straight up to the lover and confront him.

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In doing this you must endeavour to look your best. Turn a side face to him, and keep your head well up, assuming an air of great superiority. The attitude will greatly add to the effect.

The next thing to do is to crush the bachelor with a few well-chosen words, and, having struck him dumb, coolly show him the door. You should be polite, but as cutting as a razor, and more impassive than the law itself. This show of icy disdain will of itself very likely produce a 'catastrophe' in your wife's mind. Let there be no cries, no gesticulations, no transports of passion.

'Men in high society,' says a young English author, 'are the very opposite of those little people who cannot even lose a fork without raising an alarm.'

When the bachelor has departed, and you are alone with your wife, you should set about to bring her back to you for the rest of your life.

Assume an air of calmness suggestive of the profundity of the emotions at work within you, and take up your stand in front of her; then, in talking to her, use any of the following suggestions that may seem suitable:—'Madame, I do not intend to speak to you of broken vows, nor of my love for you; you have too much sense and I too much pride for me to condescend to the trite reproaches usually made by husbands in cases such as these; not but what there is ample justification for them, but I do not even feel anger or resentment. It is not I that have been outraged, for I have too good a conscience to fear the ridicule and opprobrium with which the world usually covers the man whose wife has been guilty of misconduct. I look into my heart, and I fail to see in what way I have deserved your unfaithfulness; many husbands may deserve it, but I do not. I love you still. I have never failed, even in my duty towards you, for I have never felt my love a burden; the obligations imposed by true feeling are always pleasant. You have enjoyed

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the fullest measure of my confidence, and you have been allowed to manage my money; I have denied you nothing. This, indeed, is the first time that I have ever had cause to treat you, I will not say with severity, but with disapproval. But we will leave all that, for I need make no apologies to you at a moment when you show me so plainly that there must be something wrong in me, and that I am not destined by nature to accomplish the difficult task of making you happy. I therefore only ask you, as friend to friend, how you could endanger the lives of three people in this rash way: that of the mother of my children, who will always be entitled to my reverence; that of the head of the family; and that of him—whom you love.’ (She will perhaps try to throw herself at your feet; but do not let her—she is not worthy of it.) ‘So you do not love me, Eliza? Well, my poor child’ (you should only call her ‘poor child’ in the case of your having discovered the intrigue before it has gone too far), why should we deceive one another? Why did you not tell me so before? If love between us is dead, may not friendship and confidence still remain? Are we not still companions, travelling the same road together? May one not sometimes stretch the other a hand to help her along or to save her from falling? But I am saying too much, and I am wounding your pride. . . . Eliza! Eliza!’

What, in heaven’s name, can the woman say? Here is a ‘catastrophe’ indeed!

Out of every hundred women there are at least six who, after a shock of this kind, will return, like the feeble creatures they are, perhaps for ever to their husband’s arms; they will fear any further trouble, as a burnt child fears the fire. But it is possible that such a scene may produce the same effect as an alexipharmic drug, of which only a prudent dose should be administered. With some soft-natured women, gentle, timid souls, it will be enough if you point to the

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lover's hiding-place, shrug your shoulders, and say, 'Monsieur A. Z. is in there! How could you bring yourself to take part in a game that might end in the death of two brave men? I will leave you; see that you dismiss him quickly, and do not let it occur again!'

But there are women who break their hearts over the terrible disaster, and some whose brains reel under the strain, and who contract serious illnesses. Some, indeed, go out of their mind. There have been cases in which the woman has poisoned herself, and died suddenly; we imagine that you do not desire the death of a sinner.

Even the most beautiful and the most gay of all the Queens of Scotland, the unfortunate Mary Stuart, after she had seen Rizzio killed almost in her very arms, could still find it in her heart to love Bothwell; but then she was a queen, and queens are not to be placed in the same category with other women.

But now let us suppose that the woman whose portrait adorns our first meditation is a smaller edition of Mary Stuart, and, without further delay, raise the curtain on the fifth act of the grand drama, Marriage.

A matrimonial 'catastrophe' may occur at any time and in any place, and may be brought about by a thousand and one little things—a handkerchief, as in 'Othello'; or a pair of slippers, as in 'Don Juan'; or your wife's calling out 'Dear Alphonse' in mistake for 'Dear Adolphe.' Again, a husband who sees that his wife is in debt may one fine morning send to the biggest creditor, and summon him to the house, and so bring about a 'catastrophe.' 'Monsieur Josse, you are a jeweller, and your passion for selling jewels is only equalled by your passion for getting the money for them. Madame la Comtesse owes you thirty thousand francs. If you would like the money to-morrow—(there is always your visit to the manufacturer at the end of the month)—come to her at mid-

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day. I, her husband, shall be in the room ; pay no attention to any attempts she may make to keep you quiet. Be stern—and I will pay you.'

The 'catastrophe' is to marriage what figures are to arithmetic.

The principles of matrimonial philosophy contained in the second part of the book are all, so far as they relate to human feelings, taken from nature. We have culled them here and there from the pages of the great book of the world. Just as there are men of intellect who observe the canons of good taste by instinct, and would often find it difficult to give the principles on which their predilections are based, so are there numbers of passionate men who, without working on any definite plan, make use of the expedients which are here mentioned with wonderful success. Their position would only reveal to them fragments of a vast whole ; in what they see of it, they resemble the scientists of the sixteenth century, whose microscopes had not been sufficiently perfected to allow of their actually seeing those creatures of whose existence they were assured through their patient and brilliant investigations.

We hope that we have already said enough to dispel a notion that is sometimes harboured by frivolous men, namely, that marriage is a sinecure. To our mind a husband who allows himself to feel bored is a heretic—or worse ; at all events, he is a man who has no conception whatever of what married life means. These meditations may perhaps reveal to many of the uninitiated some of the mysteries of a world before which they have hitherto been standing open-eyed, without seeing anything at all.

We also hope that a wise application of these principles may gain us many converts, and that, if we were to place a blank sheet between this part and the next—

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on Civil War—it would be covered with tears and regrets.

Out of the four hundred thousand honest women whom we chose so carefully from all the European nations, we like to think that only a certain number, say three hundred thousand, are perverse, charming, adorable, bellicose enough to raise the standard of Civil War !

To arms, then, to arms !

PART III.

CIVIL WAR.

‘ Beautiful as the seraphim of Klopstock, terrible as the devils of Milton.’—DIDEROT.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

THE DECLARATION.

THERE is now but little advice that we can give a husband ; it is far less a question of knowing that he will never succumb than of seeing if he can possibly hold out.

Yet we will set up a few torches round the arena where the husband is soon to stand alone with his God and the law, confronting a wife backed by her own duplicity and the whole army of society.

LXXXII. From a woman who is in love we may expect anything ; to her we may impute everything.

LXXXIII. The woman who is about to deceive her husband always carefully thinks out how she is going to act, but she is never logical.

LXXXIV. Most women proceed by leaps and bounds, like a flea. The daring of their ideas, as originally conceived, carries them through—interruptions in the carrying out of these ideas are, if anything, favourable. But they spread their forces over an area that can easily be surrounded by those of the husband ; and,

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if he keeps a cool head, he may in the end manage to damp their powder.

LXXXV. A husband should never address an angry word to his wife in the presence of a third party.

LXXXVI. The moment a wife makes up her mind to break her vows, her husband is everything in her eyes—or nothing.

LXXXVII. A woman's whole existence is either in her brain, or in her heart, or in her passion. According to the age at which his wife has formed her estimate of life, a husband can judge whether her first breach of faith proceeds from vanity, affection, or temperament. If she is influenced by temperament, it may be that it is diseased, and can be cured—if by affection, the husband has a very fair chance of success—but, if by vanity, his case is hopeless. The woman whose existence is in her brain is a hopeless bore. She has all the defects of a loving woman, without any of her finer qualities. She is without pity, without love, without virtue, without sex.

LXXXVIII. A woman whose existence is in her brain will try to encourage in her husband feelings of indifference ; a woman whose existence is in her heart will endeavour to inspire hatred ; a passionate woman will endeavour to inspire disgust.

LXXXIX. A husband risks nothing in pretending to believe that his wife is faithful, or in silently assuming an air of patient resignation. Silence worries a woman more than anything.

XC. It is the mark of a fool to show that his wife's passion is an open secret ; the only course for a sensible man is to pretend that he knows nothing at all. It is said, too, that all men are sensible in France.

XCI. The rock on which married people most often

THE DECLARATION

split is public ridicule—‘At least make a show of loving me before other people!’ ought to be a household word. For both the husband and the wife to lose honour, esteem, consideration, respect, or whatever you like to call this precious public opinion, were indeed a tragedy.

These axioms all refer only to the beginning of the fight. The axioms for the final struggle will come later.

We have called this crisis ‘Civil War’ for two reasons :—never was war waged of a more truly domestic nature, and, at the same time, on such courteous lines.

We have now to consider where and how this fatal war will first break out.

Do not for a moment imagine that your wife will sound a trumpet as she calls out her men! An officer she may perhaps have—but no army! And yet these feeble forces will be quite sufficient for the destruction of your peace of mind.

‘You forbid me to see those who are congenial to me!’—these words have served as a manifesto in many a home. The phrase, and all that it implies, is the formula which vain and artificial women most often employ.

A very common form of manifesto is that issued from the marriage bed—the chief seat of the war. We will treat of this by itself in the meditation on ‘The Different Kinds of Weapons,’ and in the paragraph on ‘Modesty in its relation to Marriage.’

Lymphatic women often affect hypochondria, and pretend to be half dead, in order to obtain the benefits of a separation.

To think that our honour and our reputation are dependent on our actions, or on the justification which conscience gives to our conduct, is one of the greatest errors man can make. A man who lives in the world is born the slave of public opinion. In France a husband has far less influence in the world than his wife ;

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and she before all others has the power of making him appear ridiculous. Women have a wonderful talent for colouring with plausible excuses any recriminations they are pleased to make. They never defend anything but their wrongs, but they excel in this branch of the art of self-defence, frequently playing off reason against authority, and bald statements against proofs, with great success. They understand one another perfectly, and if one woman presents another with some weapon which she herself has been forbidden to sharpen, she immediately grasps the situation. Sometimes, it is true, they destroy the husband without intending to do so—they will set the match to the fire, and then be horrified at the conflagration.

As a general rule all women side with one another against the tyrant husband ; an unseen bond unites them, as though they were priests at the same altar. A woman may hate another woman, and still be willing to protect her. You can never hope to gain the mastery over more than one ; and even that one will probably in the end triumph over you.

If women think you are a tyrant they will immediately put you under a ban. You find sarcastic smiles on every lip, biting epigrams in everything they say to you. The lively creatures first amuse themselves with chiselling a handle for the dagger they have forged, and then they neatly stab you.

The perfidious art of reticence, of maintaining a malicious silence, of imagining wickedness, of asking a favour in a good-tempered, misleading way—is used against you in the struggle. The man who presumes to keep his wife under a yoke is too dangerous to live. Is not his conduct a lampoon on husbands in general ? All womankind will attack him ; and the weapons they use will be cutting jests, serious argument, or trite aphorisms. A troop of bachelors stand by to help them, and you are hunted out of house and home, as though you were some wild eccentric being, some tyrant, an evil

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bedfellow, a strange man, or a man thoroughly to be mistrusted.

Your wife's defence of you is like that of the bear in the fable ; she throws stones at your head to drive away the flies. She tells you in the evening all that she has heard about you during the day, asking you to render an account of deeds you have not committed, of conversations in which you have not taken part. She in the meantime has been excusing you from purely imaginary offences ; boasting of a liberty which she does not enjoy in order to exonerate you from the charge of not leaving her free to go where she pleases. She has followed you everywhere with an enormous rattle, which harasses you with its fearful noise. The dear friend of days gone by now proceeds to deafen you, and amuse herself by sticking thorns in everything you are likely to touch. She will receive you with a smiling welcome in the presence of other people ; at home she will be cross and peevish. When you are gay she will be sulky, when you are sad she will sorely try your patience with her mirth. Your face will always be the antithesis of hers.

Few men are strong enough to hold out against these early tactics, so cleverly devised by the wife, which remind one of the Cossacks' shout of ' Hurrah ! Hurrah ! ' as they rush to battle. Some husbands lose their tempers, and thereby do their cause an irreparable injury ; others abandon their wives altogether. In short, there are many men who, although of superior mental ability, yet do not know how to use the enchanted ring, which would, if only they knew which way to turn it, dispel all these terrible phantasmagoria.

Two-thirds of the women in the world gain their independence by these manœuvres alone—manœuvres that are really only a review of their forces ; and in these cases the war is soon over.

But a strong man, who is courageous enough to keep a cool head during the first attack, can gain a great deal

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of amusement by revealing to his wife, in a few bitingly sarcastic phrases, what the secret motives of her action really are, and by following her step by step into the labyrinth, telling her again and again that she is deceiving herself, never abandoning his bantering manner, and never getting angry.

But, for all that, war has been declared, and if the husband is not blown up in the first explosion, the woman has plenty of other resources to fall back upon. We will now proceed to enunciate them.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

THE PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGY.

THE Archduke Charles wrote a very fine treatise on the art of war, entitled 'The Principles of Strategy as Applied to the Campaigns of 1796.' These principles seem to us to do for the soldier what a treatise on poetry does for the poet. But we are nowadays much more independent. We invent rules for what we do, and then proceed to do things in order to justify the existence of the rules. Of what avail were the ancient principles of warfare to the fiery genius of Napoleon? And if you take the advice given by this great general, whose new tactics destroyed the old ones, and reduce it to a system, what guarantee have you that the future will not produce yet another Napoleon? Books on the art of War have practically the same fate as old books on Chemistry and Physics. Everything in the world changes with time.

This, in a few words, is the history of this book of ours.

As long as we were dealing with a passive woman—one who was half asleep—nothing was easier than to weave the net under which we wished to keep her confined; but the moment she awakes and begins to

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struggle, she throws everything into a state of confusion. A husband wishing to entangle his wife in the toils set forth in Part II., would resemble Wurmser, Mack, and Beaulieu, pitching camps and making marches, while Napoleon led them from one place to another, so that his own ends might be served by separating them.

Your wife will act like Napoleon acted. You may well ask how you are to get at the truth when you are each of you hiding it under the same falsehood, and when you are each setting the same traps. And again, whose will be the victory when you are both caught with your hands in the same snare?

‘My darling, I have to go out; I must go and see Madame So-and-So, and I have ordered the horses. Will you come with me? Do—be amiable for once!’

You say to yourself: ‘She will be nicely caught if I say I will come! She only asks me because she thinks I will refuse.’

‘And you reply: ‘I have at this very moment an appointment with Monsieur So-and-So; he has heard some rumour that may compromise our interests in such-and-such an enterprise, and I simply must see him about it. Then I have to go on to the Minister of Finance; so that it all fits in beautifully.’

‘Very well, my love; go and dress while Céline finishes my toilet. Mind you don’t keep me waiting.’

‘I’m ready, dearie,’ you say, coming back after a few minutes, shaven, dressed, and booted.

But everything has altered. A letter has come in the meantime; or Madame is indisposed; or her dress does not set properly; or the dressmaker has called;—if not the dressmaker, then your son, or your mother.

Ninety-nine out of a hundred husbands would go off without any suspicion, believing their wives to be well protected, whereas they are, in reality, driving their husbands from the house.

There is one wife over whom the husband can never gain a victory—a wife who does not have to manage

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the money, who freely exercises her intellect, and meditates day and night on the kinds of day she seems doomed to spend. Such a woman soon discovers the mistake she has made in letting herself be entrapped, and in letting a 'catastrophe' take her unawares ; henceforward she will direct all her weapons against you in person.

There is, we will suppose, a certain man of whom your wife cannot bear the sight ; she cannot endure his tone, his manners, the cast of his mind. Everything about him worries her to distraction ; she is persecuted by him ; he is hateful to her. It appears that she is in this expressly trying to aggravate you, for he is a man of whom you think a great deal ; you like his disposition, for he flatters you ; your wife goes so far as to say that your regard for him is nothing but vanity. If you give a ball, a party, or a concert, you invariably have a discussion on the subject of whom you are to invite, and Madame complains that you force her to receive people whom she does not like.

' At any rate I shall never have to reproach myself that I did not warn you. That man will get you into trouble ; you mark my words. You should have consulted your wife. I may tell you that this ' Baron,' of whom you are enamoured, is a very dangerous person, and you are making a great mistake in letting him come to the house. But it is just like you ; you compel me to look upon a face I cannot bear, and when I ask you to invite Monsieur So-and-So, you refuse, because, forsooth, you think I find pleasure in his society. I admit he is a good talker, and an altogether charming and agreeable person, but you are worth two of him.'

This rough sketch of a woman's tactics, which are accompanied by deceptive gestures, penetrating glances, treacherous words, and even the snares of a malicious silence, will give you some idea of the nature of her conduct.

Most husbands like the idea of laying a trap ; they

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introduce both Monsieur So-and-So and the hated 'Baron' to the house, expecting to find a lover in the person of the bachelor of whom his wife apparently approves.

Again and again have I come across young men, regular scatterbrains in love, who were simply the dupes of women compelled, for the sake of creating a little diversion in their lives, to pretend to a loving friendship with them—it was their way of 'cauterising' their husbands, as in the days gone by their husbands cauterised them !

The poor innocent young men would spend their days in the most careful execution of commissions—engaging boxes at the theatres, riding by the side of their so-called mistress's carriage. Women whose hands they had never even kissed were publicly spoken of as 'theirs,' and their self-conceit would keep them from denying the pleasant rumour ; like young priests who say 'white masses,' they would take a delight in a passion that was all sham, veritable supernumeraries of love that they were.

In circumstances of this kind, a husband would, on returning home, ask the concierge if any one had called.

'Monsieur le Baron came to see you two hours ago. When he heard that only Madame was at home, he did not come in ; but Monsieur So-and-So is with her.'

You enter, and see a young bachelor, smartly dressed, perfumed, wearing the latest tie—in fact, an exquisite in every way. He seems to have a wholesome respect for you. Your wife spends her time in listening for the sound of his footsteps, and is constantly amusing herself with his society ; when you forbid her to see him, she is very much upset, and it is only years afterwards (see the Meditation on Final Symptoms) that you become aware of Monsieur So-and-So's innocence and the 'Baron's' guilt.

It is, to our mind, a very clever manœuvre for a

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young girl, being in the throes of an irresistible passion, to anathematise the man whom she does not love, and lavish on her lover many little imperceptible marks of love, and then, as soon as her husband is convinced that she loves the 'sigisbeo,' and detests the 'patito,' to compromise herself with the 'patito' (having first carefully calculated the risk), and make both the husband and the hated bachelor think that her aversion and her love are alike feigned. Having thus completely mystified her husband, she allows a passionate letter to fall into his hands. One evening, when the 'catastrophe' which she has so cleverly nursed has come to a head, she throws herself at her husband's feet, waters them with her tears, and—knows that she has won the day.

'I respect and honour you so well,' cries she, 'that I will have no other confidant than you. I love! Love is a feeling that I cannot easily control, but what I can do is to confess it to you; I pray you, protect me—save me from myself. Be my master, and be a harsh master; take me away from here, far from him who has caused us all this sorrow, and console me; I hope and pray I may forget him. I do not wish to be false to you. In all humility, I beg you to pardon the treachery which my love suggested. Yes, I confess that the feeling I pretended to have for my friend was only a trap; I like him well enough,—but love,—oh! forgive me!—I can love none but——' (here follows sob after sob)—'oh! let us go; let us leave Paris!'

She weeps; her hair is dishevelled, her dress all undone; at midnight, or thereabouts, the husband forgives her. The friend is from this moment onward out of danger, and the minotaur has devoured a fresh victim.

What possible rules can one give for combating adversaries such as these, adversaries possessing all the diplomacy of a Vienna Congress, as strong when they give themselves up as when they run away? What man is strong enough to overthrow such strength and

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such power, and to follow his wife through such a labyrinth of intrigue ?

For an intelligent man, with a mind alert enough to allow of his thinking and acting at the same time, it is mere child's play to vindicate the false to ascertain the true, the true to discover the false ; suddenly to change the attack, and spike the cannon at the very moment of firing ; to go up into a mountain with the enemy, only to descend into the plain five minutes later ; to follow him in his intricate shifts and turns, quick as those of a weather-cock swinging in the wind ; to obey when there is need of obedience, and at the proper time passively to resist ; to acquire the art of running from one idea to the other, as a pianist runs from the bottom of the piano to the top ; to fear his wife's caresses, and endeavour to get from them hints as to what is going on rather than pleasure—is mere child's play, I say ; and yet there are husbands who are frightened at the mere idea of putting these principles into practice against a woman.

They prefer to lead miserable lives, buffeted by every defeat, unstable as a rolling-pin !

Some will tell you that they could never live through so perpetual a strain, nor alter their whole lives for the purpose of meeting the difficulties that present themselves. In these cases the woman triumphs. She recognises that she is superior to her husband in wit and in energy, at any rate for the moment, and consequently feels a contempt for her lord and master.

Men are not always masters in their own homes, because most of them are not clever enough.

Those who take upon themselves the ever-recurring toils of this terrible duel, stand, it is true, in need of great moral courage.

You have to employ every strategic resource in your power in the struggle against these artful creatures ; the setting of traps often avails you very little.

When once a woman has made up her mind to de-

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ceive, her face becomes as a mask, blank and impenetrable. Take, for instance, the following example, for the genuineness of which I can vouch.

A very pretty and very gay young coquette of Paris had not yet risen from her bed ; at its head stood one of her dearest ' friends.' A letter was brought in to her from another of her most ardent admirers, whom she allowed to say what he liked. The note was written in pencil, and ran as follows :—

' I hear that Monsieur C—— is with you ; I am waiting below to blow out his brains.'

Madame D——, quietly continuing her conversation with Monsieur C——, asked him to hand her a little red morocco writing-case that lay on a table near the bed.

' Thank you, my love,' she said to him. ' You can go on with what you were saying. I am listening.'

C—— spoke to her, and she answered him as she wrote the following :—

' If you are really jealous of C——, you may as well blow one another's brains out. I know that you can die, but whether you can behave like a sensible person, I do not know.'

' My dear,' she said to her friend, ' light this candle, please. Thank you very much. And please give this letter to Monsieur d'H——; he is waiting for it downstairs.'

It was all done as coolly as possible. Her voice was calm, her features unmoved. Her boldness was crowned with complete success. When Monsieur d'H—— received the reply from the hand of Monsieur C——, he felt his anger slipping away from him, and it was all he could do to keep from laughing.

The more torches we introduce into this vast cavern the huger it seems. We shall be performing our task in a more agreeable and a more instructive manner if we set before you the strategic principles that were employed by a woman who had attained to perfection

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in the art of wickedness. A single example will serve our purpose better than a thousand theories.

One evening, towards the close of a dinner given by Prince Lebrun to some intimate friends, the guests, warmed by champagne, began to discuss the eternal question of feminine artfulness and powers of deceit. The recent adventures of Madame la Comtesse R. D. S. J. D. A. and her necklace had started the conversation.

A famous savant, and a great favourite with the Emperor, vigorously upheld the opinion (perhaps hardly a manly one) that no man should be allowed to frustrate a woman's plots.

'I have come to the conclusion that nothing is sacred to them.'

The ladies all exclaimed at this.

'But I can tell you of one incident—an exception to the general rule.'

'Let us hear it,' said a young woman eagerly.

'Yes, tell us about it!' cried all the guests together.

The old man very prudently looked round the table, and having satisfied himself with regard to the ladies' ages, smiled and said :—

'Since we have all of us had a fair experience of life, I will tell you the story.'

Every one was silent, and the savant, taking a little book from his pocket, proceeded to read from it :—

When I was twenty years of age, young and innocent, I fell violently in love with the Comtesse de —, and she deceived me. I was, of course, furiously angry, and she left me. Being very young (I was but twenty), I regretted her bitterly, and she forgave me; and as I was only twenty, and, as I have said, young and innocent, she continued to deceive me; but she did not again abandon me when I found her out. I was the happiest of men, believing myself to be the lover she favoured most. The Comtesse was a friend of

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Madame de T——, a lady who appeared to have designs on my affections. She was never guilty of compromising her dignity with regard to me, for she was a good woman, and circumspect. One night, when I was in attendance on the Comtesse in her box at the theatre, I heard some one call me from the next box. It was Madame de T——.

‘What!’ she said, as I entered, ‘have you come already? Is it your faithfulness that has brought you so soon, or have you nothing better to do?’

There was, it is true, something roguish in her voice and manner, but I was far from expecting anything extravagantly romantic.

‘Have you any plans for to-night?’ she asked; ‘if you have, you must forget them. If I save you from the boredom of your own company, you must give up something in return. No, no! ask no questions! Just do what I say. Please call my people.’

I bowed and obeyed.

‘Go to your master,’ she said to a lackey, ‘and remind him that he is only to come to-morrow.’

She made a sign to him, and he came close to her. She whispered something in his ear, and he departed.

The opera began. I hazarded a word or two, but she silenced me.

‘Other people will hear,’ she said; ‘they seem to be listening.’

At the end of the first act the lackey brought her a note, telling her at the same time that all was ready. She smiled at me, took my arm, and carried me off to her carriage. I was out on the high-road before I had time to ask whither I was bound. The only answer I got to every question I ventured to put was a hearty peal of laughter. Had I not known that this woman was head over ears in love with the Marquis de V——, and that she was fully aware that I knew of her passion, I should have considered myself in luck’s way; but she knew, too, where my heart lay, as the Comtesse de —— was

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her intimate friend. I therefore put on one side any presumptuous thoughts that occurred to me and waited. We had supper where we first changed horses, being served with lightning rapidity, and started off again immediately. The affair was beginning to look serious.

I asked pointedly where the merry jest was to take me.

‘Where?’ said she, laughing. ‘To the finest place in the world. But guess where. I give you a thousand guesses. Yet you may just as well save your breath, for you would never guess. We are going to my husband. Do you know him?’

‘Not at all.’

‘So much the better; I half thought you did. I hope you will like him. Our friends are endeavouring to bring us together again—negotiations have been going on for the last six months; for a month we have ourselves been corresponding. I think it very polite of me to visit him.’

‘Certainly it is. But what shall I be doing? What good shall I be in hastening a reconciliation?’

‘That is my business. You are young and amiable, and not yet “broken in”; I like you, and you will save me from the boredom of a tête-à-tête.’

‘It seems rather funny that you should choose the day, or rather the night, of reconciliation for me to make your husband’s acquaintance. I can see nothing to look forward to in the first encounter, nothing at all pleasant in the thought of the figure we shall all three cut.’

‘I have brought you with me so that I may be amused,’ said she, a little haughtily; ‘so pray do not start preaching a sermon to me.’

She seemed so decided that I gave in, and began to laugh with her, so that we both seemed quite cheerful. We had changed horses again. Night’s mysterious torch lit up a perfectly clear sky, and was just beginning to diffuse a voluptuous half-light on all

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the surrounding objects. I felt that our tête-à-tête must soon come to an end. I was called upon from time to time to admire the beauty of the country, the peaceful night, the penetrating calm of nature. In order to enjoy it together (as was only natural that we should), we leant our heads out of the same window, and my face lightly touched hers. When the carriage gave a sudden jerk, she squeezed my hand, and, by what seemed to me a most extraordinary chance—for the stone that rocked the carriage was not at all big—I found myself holding Madame de T—— in my arms. I know not what we were gazing at ; all I do know is that, although the moon was shining clear and bright, things were beginning to look blurred, when suddenly she drew away from me, and threw herself back in the carriage.

After sitting quiet for a little while, lost in thought, she asked me : ‘ Is it your intention to convince me of the imprudence of this step ? ’

‘ My intention ! ’ I replied. ‘ Surely I may leave intentions to you ! You are far too clever for me ; but perhaps you will forgive me if I tell you that I was taken completely by surprise. The jerk was a pure chance.’

‘ It seemed to me that you reckoned on it.’

While we were talking, we entered the courtyard of the château. Everything was lighted up, and we received a brilliant welcome—but not from the husband ; judging from his face, he seemed very much put out at the sight of me. Monsieur de T—— came down to the carriage door, showing as much affectionate regard for his wife as was suited to the needs of a reconciliation. I learnt later that there were certain family reasons for an agreement. I was introduced, and treated to a stiff bow. He offered his arm to his wife, and I followed, pondering on what I was once, and what I had now become. We went through rooms that were furnished and decorated in the most exquisite taste.

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The master of the house had outdone luxury itself in the elegance of his decorations, with the idea of reviving as it were an out-worn body by encasing it in voluptuous surroundings. Not knowing what else to do, I went into raptures over the house. The Goddess knew how to do the honours of the temple, and received my compliments very graciously.

'This is nothing,' said she, 'to my husband's private apartments.'

'Madame,' said he, 'I dismantled them five years ago.'

'Ah!' she exclaimed.

At supper, as luck would have it, she offered Monsieur some veal.

'Madame,' he said, 'I have been on milk-diet for the last three years.'

'Ah!' she exclaimed again.

It would be difficult to find three people more astonished to find themselves in one another's company than we were. The husband looked on me as little better than a knave, and I played up to his idea of me. Madame de T—— smiled at me from time to time, and was altogether charming; Monsieur de T—— seemed to regard me as a necessary evil. Madame de T—— played into his hands admirably. Never in my life have I sat through so strange a supper. When it was over, I imagined that we should all retire early to bed. I was right only in the case of Monsieur de T——. As we entered the salon, he said: 'I thank you, Madame, for having taken the precaution to bring this gentleman with you. You rightly suspected me of having some evil design in store for to-morrow. I will retire.'

Turning to me, he added, in bitter, ironical tones: 'I beg you to excuse my leaving you in charge of Madame'—and left us.

Thoughts that would ordinarily have lasted me a year now crowded into my brain in the space of a minute. When left alone, we sat looking at one another with such strange glances that, to make a diver-

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sion, Madame de T—— proposed that we should take a turn on the terrace, while the servants had their supper.

It was a lovely night. In the darkness we could only just distinguish the various objects in our path; they seemed, by being half-hidden, only to be left the more to the imagination. The garden was situated on the side of a hill, and descended in terraces to the banks of the Seine; one caught glimpses of the river dotted with lovely little green islands, as it followed its winding course. The river added to the beauty of the place, which was enchanting enough in itself, in a thousand wonderful ways. We strolled along one of the terraces, that was studded with great, thick trees. My companion had recovered from the effects of her husband's irony, and, as we walked to and fro, confided several things to me. . . . Her confidences drew some from me, and, as time went on, our conversation became more and more intimate and interesting. Madame de T—— had at first given me her arm; gradually we had slipped our arms round one another, till at last, somehow, we never exactly knew how, my arm was supporting her so firmly that she seemed hardly to touch the ground as she walked. The position, however delightful, became tiring before long. We had been walking for some considerable time, and seemed still to have a great deal to say to one another, when we came to a grassy bank, on which we sat, without altering our relative positions. It was when we were thus seated that we began to talk of the delights of opening one's heart to a friend.

'Ah!' said she, 'who can enjoy those pleasures better than we can, and with greater feelings of security? I know perfectly well how you feel, and how anxious you are that there may be nothing for which you need reproach yourself.'

Perhaps she wanted me to contradict her, but I said nothing, and we continued to persuade ourselves that we were two perfectly innocent friends.

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‘And yet I was afraid,’ said I, ‘that the little incident that surprised you in the carriage some time back rather tried your courage.’

‘Oh! I am not so easily frightened.’

‘I am afraid it has cast a shadow between us.’

‘What can I do to reassure you?’

‘Grant me now the kiss that then——’

‘Very well; for if I refuse, you would, in your conceit, think I was afraid of you.’

I took the kiss. . . . Kisses are like confidences; one breeds another and . . . they followed fast on one another, and interrupted or rather took the place of conversation. They hardly left us time to sigh. . . . Silence fell on all around. We heard it, for there are times when the silence can be heard. We rose without a word, and resumed our walk.

‘We must go in,’ she said, ‘the air blows cold off the river.’

‘I have no fear of it,’ I replied.

‘Perhaps not; but no matter—let us go in.’

‘Do you mean that we are to go in on my account? Do you want to save me from allowing my mind to be filled with wrong impressions of this walk . . . and from the dangers of its consequences for me—solely?’

‘You are indeed modest!’ she said, and laughed. ‘And I must say you give me credit for great delicacy!’

‘Do you think so? But since you look at it in that light, let us by all means go in.’

Awkward remarks of this nature are bound to occur between two people who force themselves to say the opposite of that which really occupies their minds.

She compelled me to take the path leading to the château. I do not know now, any more than I did then, whether her decision was against her own inclination, if she had firmly made up her mind, or if she shared with me a feeling of disappointment that a scene that had begun so well had now come to an end; at all events, as if by a kind of instinct, we walked

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more slowly, and with feelings of dissatisfaction with one another and with ourselves, we strolled sadly back towards the house. We did not seem to know what to make of it all. We were neither of us justified in asking for anything further; it was simply that we had nothing for which to reproach ourselves—a quarrel might have cleared the air! But we had nothing to quarrel about. We approached the house, silently endeavouring to muster strength enough to perform the duty we had so unfortunately laid upon ourselves. We were at the door when Madame de T—— said:

‘I am not pleased with you! In return for all my confidences you have told me nothing! You tell me not a word about the Comtesse. And yet it is so sweet to talk of those we love! And I would have listened so kindly! It would have been the least I could do, after having deprived you of her company.’

‘Could I not reproach you for the same thing?’ I replied. ‘And if, instead of entrusting to me the particulars of this strange reconciliation, in which I am playing so very strange a part, you had spoken to me of the Marquis——’

‘Stop!’ she cried. ‘Surely you understand women well enough to know that they must take their own time in revealing their secrets. But, to return to yourself, are you happy with my dear friend?—Alas! I fear not!’

‘Why believe what gossips delight to whisper abroad, Madame?’

‘Oh, spare yourself the trouble of denying it—the Comtesse is more frank than you are. Women of her character are prodigal of their love secrets, especially when a discreet countenance like yours might otherwise deprive them of a triumph. Far be it from me to accuse her of being a flirt; but a prude has no less vanity than a coquette,—so be candid, and tell me,—have you not good reason to complain?’

‘Madame, it is really too cold to stay here any

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longer ; you wished to go in ? ' I asked her with a smile.

' Do you find it cold ? That is curious, for it is really quite warm.'

She took my arm again, and we walked on, without noticing the direction. That which she had just told me about the man whom I knew to be her lover, and about my mistress, together with our strange journey, the incident in the carriage, the incident of the grassy bank, the time of night, the dim light—all combined to confuse my senses. Desire had taken hold of me, but a feeling of self-respect held me back ; a moment's thought might have saved me altogether, but I was too much agitated to reflect. While a prey to thoughts of the most bewildering nature, she continued to talk to me of the Comtesse, and my silence seemed only to confirm all that she was pleased to say. At length her words brought me to myself. ' How refined she is ! ' she was saying. ' And how graceful ! On her lips treachery is but a flash of wit ; unfaithfulness but the logical outcome of reasoning, a sacrifice to the conventions ; she never forgets herself, is always amiable, seldom tender, never true ; gallant by nature, modest from habit ; lively, discreet, wise, thoughtless ; a very Proteus, with the manners of the Graces ; she attracts you to her side, and then runs away. How many are the parts I have seen her play ! And, between you and me, what dupes are the men who dance attendance on her ! What a fool she made of the Baron ! What tricks she played on the Marquis ! She only took you up because she wished to give those two rivals something to occupy their minds ; they were on the verge of causing a scandal, for she had gone rather too far with them, and had let them realise it. She introduced you into the scene, and occupied them with you, encouraging them while she drove you to despair, chiding you, consoling you. Ah, happy is the woman who can play such a game

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without compromising herself! But—is it really happiness?’

This last sentence, which was accompanied by a significant sigh, was a master-stroke. I felt as though a bandage had fallen from my eyes, not noticing that she put another in its place. My mistress seemed to me as false as a woman could be, and I had supposed her to be full of tenderness. I sighed, not caring who heard me. My companion seemed to regret that she had distressed me, and that she had allowed herself to be led into painting a picture that I might well look upon with suspicion, seeing that it came from the hand of a woman. I do not know how I answered her, for I had not understood half her words; we both of us seemed to be embarked on a voyage of sentiment, without knowing whither we were drifting. Fortunately we had taken a path that led to a summer-house, which she pointed out to me, at the end of the terrace—‘a summer-house full of tender memories,’ she said, and told me how it was furnished.

‘What a pity we have not the key!’

As she spoke we drew nearer to the little house, and found it open. We certainly missed the peaceful light as we entered, but darkness, too, has its charms. We shivered as we crossed the threshold. It was a sanctuary—but was it a sanctuary of love? We seated ourselves on a sofa, and listened for a moment to the beating of our hearts. The last rays of the waning moon were shining on us, and we shuddered involuntarily. A hand that repelled me seemed to strike at my heart. We half rose to go, but fell back again, feeling more agitated than before. Our thoughts entertained us in silence—nothing is more enchanting than such dumb conversations. Madame de T—took refuge in my arms, pillowed her head on my breast, sighed, and grew gradually calmer under my caresses; she tortured herself and consoled herself in one breath, and seemed now to ask of love all that love had erewhile denied her. The gentle

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murmur of the river broke the stillness of the night, harmonising, so it seemed, with the beating of our hearts. It was too dark to discern anything clearly, but, through the transparent mists of the fine summer night, the queen of this lovely spot seemed to me enchantingly bewitching.

‘Come,’ said she, in positively angelic tones, ‘let us leave this dangerous resting-place I feel that I have no power to resist.’

She dragged me away regretfully.

‘How fortunate she is!’ sighed Madame de T——.

‘To whom do you refer?’ I asked.

‘Need I say?’ she said, with a little shudder.

We came again to the grassy bank, and stopped with one accord.

‘What an immeasurable distance there is between this place and the summer-house!’

‘This bank seems destined to be my fate,’ I said to her. ‘Whether it be that I regret something, or——,’

I do not know how it happened, but at this point the conversation changed, and became of a less serious nature. We even dared to jest about the pleasures of love, distinguishing moral pleasures from others, reducing them to their simplest forms, and proving that the bestowal of pleasure was only part of the game.

‘What a lovely night it is!’ she said. ‘Ah, well, if we are compelled by circumstances to separate to-morrow (as I suppose we shall be) the happiness we have enjoyed to-night, of which no one shall know, will not leave us bound by any ties—only a few regrets, maybe, which will be more than balanced by happy memories; and, besides, we have had our enjoyment without any of the bother that comes when the law chooses to interfere!’

To so great an extent are we machines, incapable of self-guidance (and the thought brought a blush to my

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cheeks), that in place of the delicate feelings which before had tortured me, I found myself almost concurring with these bold principles of hers, and more and more disposed to advocate the pleasures of free-love

‘The lovely night,’ she murmured, ‘this lovely spot!’

‘It has a new charm for me. May we never forget the summer-house’

‘Hidden in the château,’ she continued, with a smile, ‘there is a spot more lovely still; but, alas! I cannot show it you; you are like a child, that wants to take hold of everything, and breaks all he touches.’

Prompted by feelings of curiosity I protested that I would be very good. But she quickly changed the subject.

‘The memories of this night,’ she said, ‘would be perfect if only I were not angry with myself for speaking as I did about the Comtesse. Not that I am complaining of you; but the novelty of the thing took hold of me. I hope you have found me a pleasant companion, and I like to feel I can trust you. But trying to break down the rampart built up by habit is a weary task, and I hardly know how to set about it. By the way, what do you think of my husband?’

‘He seems surly enough, but, after all, one could hardly expect him to be anything else.’

‘His manners are not over-pleasant, I must admit; but he could hardly have regarded you with feelings of equanimity. He would soon begin to suspect this friendship of ours.’

‘If he has not already done so.’

‘And it must be confessed that he has good reason. You had better not stay any longer—you will only make him angry if you do. As soon as friends begin to come and see us again—and’ (she smiled up in my face) ‘they will come!—you must go. Besides, you have yourself to think of. Do you remember how my husband looked as he left us yesterday?’

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I began to feel inclined to look on the whole adventure as an elaborate trap, and, seeing the impression that her words had made on me, she added:

‘He was a far gayer man when he was arranging the furnishing of the room I spoke of yesterday. That was before my marriage. The retreat I just mentioned is one of the rooms of my suite. Alas! it bears witness to the artificial means Monsieur de T—— thought it necessary to employ to strengthen his affection.’

‘How delightful it would be,’ I said, intensely excited by curiosity, ‘to go there and revenge yourself on him for having deprived you of your right to exercise your charms!’

She seemed to like the idea, and said:

‘You promise to be good?’

* * *

I will throw a veil over the follies for which youth in every age has been forgiven—forgiven, because folly does not make up for disappointed hopes. In the morning, Madame de T——, looking more beautiful than ever, her heavy eyelids half shading her eyes, said to me:

‘Shall you ever love the Comtesse as well as you do me?’

I was about to reply when a friend seemed to whisper in my ear:

‘Leave her, leave her. It is eleven o’clock, and broad daylight. People are already stirring in the château.’

When I came to my senses, everything seemed to have vanished like a dream. I found myself wandering along the corridors, wondering how I was to get to my room, seeing that I had not the least idea where it was. A blunder might mean ruin, so I decided to take a walk in the grounds. The pure, fresh air cooled my brain, and gradually dispelled the wonder and amazement that had taken possession of it. Nature now no longer enchanted me—I saw things as they really were. Truth returned to my soul, my thoughts

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came to me simply and naturally, and I breathed freely once more. The first question I felt I must decide on was: what position did I hold in the heart of the woman I had just left?—I, who had been under the impression that she had, for the last two years, been madly in love with the Marquis de V——! Had she broken with him, and chosen me as his successor—or had her object been simply to revenge herself on him?

‘What a wonderful night! What a charming woman!’ I mused; and while my thoughts were thus occupied I heard a noise close behind me. I raised my eyes, and rubbed them, in my amazement at seeing standing before me—I could hardly believe it even then—the Marquis de V——!

‘I suppose you were not expecting to see me here this morning?’ said he. ‘Well, and how did it go off?’

‘You knew of my being here?’ I asked, in amazement.

‘Why, certainly! I was told the instant you left the theatre yesterday. Have you played your part well? Did the husband laugh when you arrived? Has he taken a violent dislike to you? Has he shown a horror of his wife’s lover? When are you going to be dismissed? You will see that I have made all arrangements; I have brought a nice little chaise, which is at your disposal. You will one day do the same for me, I feel sure. You may rely on me, for I am grateful and feel that such drudgery should——’

His last words gave me a clue to the mystery.

‘Why have you come so soon?’ I asked him. ‘Surely it would have been wiser to wait another day or two?’

‘One cannot foresee everything; chance brought me here to-day. I am supposed to have come from a country-house in the neighbourhood. So Madame de T—— has not told you everything? I shall have to scold her for such lack of confidence; and after all you have done for us!’

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‘ My dear Marquis, no doubt she had her reasons ! Perhaps I have not played my part so well as you seem to imagine.’

‘ Surely you have been kind to her ? Tell me all that happened——’

‘ At one time I was aware that the whole thing was not a farce, and although Madame de T—— certainly did give me a part to play——’

‘ It was not much of a one ?’

‘ You may set your mind at rest on that point. To a good actor no part is bad.’

‘ I understand—you carried it off well.’

‘ Wonderfully well.’

‘ And Madame de T—— ?’

‘ Is adorable.’

‘ Can you imagine that woman ever settling down in life ?’ he asked, looking at me triumphantly. ‘ She has put me to no end of trouble ! But so carefully have I moulded her character that she is, perhaps, the only woman in Paris whom one can really trust.’

‘ You have succeeded——’

‘ Oh, I have a special bent in that direction. Her inconstancy was nothing but frivolity, due to an uncontrolled imagination. I have gained complete mastery over her soul. You have no idea how fond she is of me. She is, in fact, charming, is she not ?’

‘ Most charming.’

‘ I don’t mind telling you in confidence, I know of only one fault. Nature, whilst bestowing so many gifts upon her, withheld the divine flame that crowns them all. Madame de T—— inspires in others every feeling—but she herself feels nothing. She is cold as stone.’

‘ I must accept what you say, not being in a position to judge for myself. You seem to know the woman as well as if you were her husband. Really, you might be taken for her husband ; and, if I had not supped with the real husband yesterday, I might——’

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‘ Was he polite, by the way?’

‘ I was treated like a dog.’

‘ I see. Let us go in and see Madame de T——
She must be up by now.’

‘ Surely, in common decency, we ought first to see
her husband?’

‘ Yes, you are right. But first take me to your
room. I must put on a little more powder.’

‘ Tell me, does he take you for her lover?’

‘ Of that you shall judge from the way I am received;
but let us go to him at once.’

I wished to avoid having to take him to a room I knew nothing of, but chance favoured me. An open door discovered my valet, asleep in an arm-chair. A candle flickered by his side. In a stupor he handed a dressing-gown to the Marquis. I was on thorns; but the Marquis was so ready to be deceived that he only saw a man half-asleep and still dreaming, and he laughed at him heartily. We then proceeded to seek Monsieur de T——. One can imagine the sort of welcome he gave me, and the solicitous compliments paid to the Marquis, whom he seemed to wish to retain by main force. He wanted to take him at once to Madame de T——, in the hope that she might be able to persuade him to stay. As for me—‘ he dared not make the same proposal. My health was known to be delicate, the country was damp and fever-laden, and I looked so much depressed that it was clear the château did not in any way agree with me,’ and so on. The Marquis again offered me his chaise, and I accepted it. The husband was overjoyed, and every one was satisfied.

But I felt I could not deny myself the pleasure of seeing Madame de T—— once more. My impatience was almost unbearable, but the Marquis seemed to see nothing at all significant in the fact that his mistress was sleeping so late.

‘ Is it not wonderful?’ he said to me, as we followed

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Monsieur de T——; ‘he could not possibly have been kinder if he had tried. He is a very fine fellow, and I shall not be sorry to see him reconciled to his wife—they make such a splendid pair. You must admit that no one could do the honours of the house better than she.’

‘No, indeed!’ I replied.

‘No matter how delightful your adventure may have been,’ said he, with an air of mystery, ‘remember, mum’s the word! I must be able to assure Madame de T—— that her secret is in good hands!’

‘She seems to rely on me more than on you. Her sleep is evidently not a troubled one.’

‘Oh, I dare say you have not your equal for sending a woman to sleep!’

‘Sending a husband to sleep, too; and perhaps a lover!’

At length Monsieur de T—— gained admission to his wife’s room. We entered, and we all seemed to feel that we were in something of a predicament.

‘I was afraid,’ said Madame de T—— to me, ‘that you might have gone before I woke up, and I should like you to believe that I should have been very sorry if you had.’

‘Madame,’ said I, in a voice that betrayed emotion—at any rate to her—‘accept my adieux.’

As she glanced from the Marquis to me she seemed somewhat troubled; but his coolness and his malicious looks reassured her. She laughed in her sleeve, as plainly as she dared, to console me, and did not lower her eyes.

‘He has played his part well,’ the Marquis whispered to her. ‘I am grateful——’

‘We will say no more of that,’ said Madame de T——; ‘trust me for realising how much we are indebted to our friend.’

At length Monsieur de T—— signed to me that it was time for me to go; the Marquis was deceiving him

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and laughing at me at the same time. I stood my ground, however, admiring Madame de T——, who could play with us both without loss of composure. After having given myself up to enjoyment of the scene for a moment, I felt it was high time for me finally to take my leave. As I withdrew, Madame de T—— followed me, under the pretence that she had a commission for me.

‘ Good-bye, sir,’ she said, ‘ I am much beholden to you, for you have given me a great deal of pleasure ; perhaps some beautiful dream will repay you ! ’ (She looked at me with an inscrutable air.) ‘ But, good-bye—and let it be for ever. You have plucked a solitary flower, blooming in a lonely spot, that no man yet——’

She stopped, ending her words with a sigh ; but, repressing her ardour, she went on, with a mischievous smile :

‘ The Comtesse loves you. I have robbed her of one or two moments of passion. I send you back to her with more knowledge. Farewell, and do not try to set my friend against me.’

She pressed my hand, and left me.

More than once had the ladies, being without fans, blushed as they listened to the old man’s fascinating story. He embellished it with details that we have been obliged to suppress, as being too outspoken for the present day ; yet we are given to understand that every lady present went out of her way to compliment him ; and, a little later, he offered to give to them, as well as to the gentlemen, a copy of his charming tale ; one of the twenty-five printed by Pierre Didot—the twenty-fourth, to be exact. I have taken the outlines of this unpublished narrative, which, strangely enough, is due, so it is said, to Dorat, and which has the merit of giving at one and the same time a splendid lesson to both husbands and bachelors, and a delightful picture of the morals of the last century.

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TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

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OF all the miseries that civil war brings on a country, the greatest is the appeal that one or other of the contending parties is bound sooner or later to make to some foreign power.

We are unfortunately obliged to admit that all women are guilty of inflicting this great misery, for the lover is only their best soldier, and is seldom one of the family, unless he be a cousin.

This meditation, then, will treat of the help that can be gained by your wife from each of the different powers that influence human life, or, what is far better, it will investigate the arts your wife will employ in calling those powers to her aid.

Two beings united in marriage have to acknowledge religion and society; they must also be prepared to live a private life, and, for their health's sake, they must follow the dictates of the doctor. We will divide this important meditation into five parts:—

- I. On the Mother-in-law.
- II. On School Friends and Intimate Friends generally.
- III. On the Lover's Relations.
- IV. On the Lady's-maid.
- V. On the Doctor.

I.—THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Up to the age of thirty a woman's face is as a page of a book that is written in a foreign language, but it is a language that may be translated, notwithstanding the fact that it is difficult and full of idioms. When she is past forty her face becomes undecipherable—simply

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that of an elderly woman, and I defy any one to understand elderly women.

Men practised in the art of diplomacy have from time to time attempted the appalling task of winning over the dowagers; if they have ever succeeded it has only been after enormous sacrifice; in the end they have always become prematurely aged and worn-out. We do not by any means advise you to imitate their methods with your mother-in-law. She will be your wife's principal aide-de-camp, for the case of the mother's not siding with the daughter is a monstrosity that, unfortunately for the husband, is very rare.

If a man is fortunate enough to have for mother-in-law a woman who is very well-preserved he will find it easy enough to keep her in abeyance, at all events for some considerable time, with the help of a more than usually bold young bachelor friend. But speaking generally, husbands with any pretensions at all to a knowledge of the science of marriage know that all they have to do is to confront their own mother with their wife's and they will be found to neutralise one another.

You may consider yourself lucky if you happen to live in town while your mother-in-law lives in the country, or *vice versâ*; but such a condition of things is, unfortunately, all too rare. To set mother and daughter at variance is certainly not an impossible undertaking; but to carry it through successfully one needs a heart as hard as Richelieu's—he was capable of setting up enmity even between mother and son. But, after all, a husband's jealousy excuses anything, and I do not expect that a man who would go so far as to forbid his wife to pray to any but the female saints of heaven would let her go to see her mother whenever she liked.

Many men pursue the more violent course of making up their minds always to be at daggers drawn with their mothers-in-law. This hostility would be good-enough policy if it did not unfortunately invari-

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ably end in the bonds uniting mother and daughter becoming still more tightened.

Such are practically all the ways of combating the maternal influence open to you. The actual benefits that your wife receives at the hands of her mother are innumerable, and the negative assistance is no less powerful. But here science cannot be of any use to us, for everything is shrouded in mystery. The help that a mother gives her daughter varies to so great an extent, and depends so very much on circumstances, that to attempt even to give a name to it is mere folly.

We will content ourselves with the following maxims, as being the most refreshing and the most salutary that the gospel of marriage has to offer :

A wife should never be allowed to go alone to see her mother.

A husband should make a careful study of the motives which induce all bachelors of less than forty with whom his wife has anything to do to become friendly with her mother; for, if it be true that a daughter rarely cares for her mother's lover, a mother, on the other hand, invariably has a weakness for her daughter's.

II.—SCHOOL FRIENDS AND INTIMATE FRIENDS GENERALLY.

Napoleon used to take a special interest in Louise de L——, the daughter of an officer who was killed at Wagram. She left Écouen to marry a rich Commissioner-General, Monsieur le Baron de V——.

Louise was eighteen, and the Baron was forty. She had a homely face, and her complexion was poor ; but she was possessed of a very charming waist, fine eyes, a small foot, a pretty hand, a wonderful power of discernment, and plenty of intelligence.

The Baron, worn out by the strain of many cam-

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paings and the excesses of a wild youth, had a face on which the Republic, the Directoire, the Consulat, and the Empire all seemed to have left their mark. He grew to love his wife so dearly that he begged the Emperor to get him a post at Paris, the better to guard his treasure. His jealousy was as great as that of Count Almaviva, but it was fed as much by vanity as by genuine passion.

The young orphan, who had married because she had been ordered to do so, was flattered to feel that she had some power over a man so much older than herself ; she considered him in every way, and attended carefully to all his wants ; but her delicacy was shocked in quite early days by the thoughts and habits of a man whose manners were reminiscent of the licence of the days of the Republic. He became one of the ' fore-ordained.'

I do not know exactly how long their honeymoon lasted, nor the precise moment at which war was declared, but I think it was in the year 1816, at a particularly brilliant ball given by Monsieur D——, Commissary-General of Provisions, that the Baron (now Commissary of Stores), was struck with admiration for pretty Madame B——, the wife of a banker, regarding her rather more lovingly than is permissible in a husband.

At about two o'clock it was discovered that the banker, tired of waiting for his wife, had gone home, leaving her still in the ball-room.

' We will see you home, my dear,' said the Baronne to Madame B——. ' Monsieur de V——, give Emilie your arm !'

And so the Baron found himself seated in his carriage by the side of a woman to whom he had been doing homage the whole of the evening, in the vain hope that he might be rewarded by just a single glance. There she sat, radiant with youth and beauty, displaying glimpses of white shoulders and fair white skin. Her

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face, still glowing from the joys of the evening, seemed to vie with the brilliancy of her satin gown, just as her eyes in their brightness rivalled the sparkle of her diamonds, and her complexion the soft white skin of those ugly pale-faced men whose ebony tresses and capricious curls are set off by their fair skin. The tones of her voice stirred his very heart. In fact, she was so adorable that he felt that Robert d'Arbrissel himself would have succumbed to her charms.

The Baron looked at his wife, who, thoroughly tired out, was asleep in a corner of the carriage, and in spite of himself he could not help comparing her toilet with Emilie's. On occasions of this kind the presence of one's wife in some strange way seems only to enhance forbidden desires. It would have been easy enough for any one to interpret the looks that the Baron directed alternately towards his wife and her friend, and Madame B—— certainly did not fail to understand them.

'Poor Louise, she is done up!' she said. 'This gay life evidently does not agree with her. She has such simple tastes—at Ecouen she was always reading.'

'And what did you do?'

'I—oh! I was always hoping that one day I might take part in a comedy. Acting was a passion with me.'

'Then why do you so seldom come and see Madame de V——? We could, at our house at Saint-Prix, act a little play together beautifully, for I have had a small theatre specially built.'

'I should like to know whose fault it is that I have seen so little of Madame de V——,' she replied. 'You are so jealous a person that you do not even allow her to visit or receive her friends.'

'I—jealous!' cried Monsieur de V——, 'after four years of married life and with three children!'

'Hush!' whispered Emilie, tapping the Baron's fingers with her fan. 'Louise is not asleep.'

The carriage stopped, and the Commissary helped his wife's beautiful friend to descend.

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‘I hope,’ said Madame B——, ‘that you will not prevent Louise from coming to my ball this week.’

The Baron bowed graciously.

The ball was a triumph for Madame B——, and the ruin of Louise’s husband; for he fell head over ears in love with Emilie, and would have sacrificed a hundred wives for her sake.

A few months after the evening on which the Baron first began to hope that he might win the love of his wife’s friend, he happened to be calling on Madame B—— when the Baronne was announced.

‘Ah!’ cried Emilie, ‘if Louise finds you here at this hour of the morning she will certainly blame me. Go into that closet, and be very careful not to make the least noise.’

The husband, caught in a trap, had nothing to do but to hide in the little closet.

‘Good morning, my dear!’ said the women to one another, as they embraced.

‘Why so early?’ asked Emilie.

‘Oh, my dear—can’t you guess? I have come to ask for an explanation.’

‘Good heavens!—a duel!’

‘Exactly, my dear. I am not like you. I love my husband, and I confess I am jealous. You are beautiful and charming, and you have every right to be a flirt. You can easily make a fool of B——, to whom your honour seems to be of so little consequence; but, seeing that you cannot possibly be in want of lovers, I beg you to leave me mine. He is always with you, and he certainly would not come if you did not invite him.’

‘What a pretty bodice you are wearing.’

‘Do you think so? Flore made it.’

‘I shall send Anastasie to her for a lesson.’

‘So, my love, I trust to your friendship. Do not fill my house with sorrow.’

‘But, my poor, dear child, how can you dream that I am in love with your husband? He’s as fat as

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a provincial deputy ; and short and ugly to boot. It is true he is generous, but that is all I can say for him ; and it is, after all, a virtue more likely to find favour in the eyes of a opera-girl. You see, my dear, if I wanted to take a lover, as you seem pleased to think, I should not choose an old man like the Baron. If I have given him any encouragement, if I have called him to my side, I can assure you it has been purely for my own amusement, or to help you—I rather thought you had a weakness for young de R——.’

‘ I ! ’ cried Louise. ‘ Heaven forbid. He is the most unbearable creature. No ; I assure you, I love my husband. You may laugh, but it is true. I know perfectly well that it may seem ridiculous, but you must hear me out. He has, as it were, made my fortune ; he is very generous, as you say, and he gives me all I need—me, who but for him would still be a poor orphan. Even if I ever cease to love him, I hope I may still keep his respect. I have no family to shelter me.’

‘ Come, come, my darling, we will say no more about it,’ said Emilie, interrupting her friend. ‘ You are wearying me to death.’

A little later the Baronne took her leave.

‘ Well, sir ? ’ cried Madame B—— as she opened the door of the closet where the poor Baron had been standing shivering with cold—it was winter-time. ‘ Well, are you not thoroughly ashamed of yourself for not worshipping so attractive a little woman ? Don’t talk to me any more of love. You may idolise me for a time, as you say you do now, but you will never love me as you love Louise. I shall never take the place in your heart of a virtuous wife and her children. One fine day I shall be deserted and left with only my own gloomy thoughts for solace, and you will say coldly, “ That woman once was mine ! ” a phrase I sometimes hear men utter with the most insulting callousness. You see, sir, I am able to reason coolly, for I do not love you. You yourself cannot really love me.’

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‘How am I to convince you that I love you?’ cried the Baron, gazing at Madame B—— intently.

Never than at this moment had she seemed more enchanting, as she uttered these hard words, tempering them with the most charming glances and roguish gestures.

‘If ever I hear that Louise has a lover, and I can feel sure that I shall be taking nothing from her, and that she will not regret the loss of your affection; when I am certain that you no longer love her, and have had certain proof of your indifference; then—I may listen to you. These words may sound odious,’ she continued, in a deep voice; ‘they really are odious, but, believe me, it is not I who utter them, but, as it were, some ruthless mathematician, explaining what will follow under certain given conditions. For a married man like you to presume to fall in love! Why, I should be mad if I encouraged a man, who could never really be mine, to hope that I might one day love him.’

‘You fiend!’ cried the husband. ‘You are not a woman, but a fiend!’

‘You are very kind,’ the young woman replied as she seized the bell-rope.

‘No, no, Emilie!’ the lover cried, in quieter tones. ‘Do not ring! Stop! Forgive me! I would sacrifice everything for your sake!’

‘And I promise nothing in return,’ she said quickly, and laughed.

‘God, how you torture me!’ he cried.

‘And have you never caused any unhappiness in your life?’ she asked. ‘Think of all the bitter tears you have been responsible for. I do not feel the slightest pity for you. If you wish me to refrain from laughing at your passion, you must make me share it.’

‘Farewell, madame. There is mercy in your harshness. I appreciate the lesson you have taught me, and I admit that I have wrongs to atone for.’

‘Go thou and repent,’ she said, with a mocking

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smile ; ‘ trying to make Louise happy will be your hardest penance.’

They parted. But the Baron’s love was of too violent a nature for the strictures of Madame B—— to fail to bring about what, indeed, she really desired—separation from his wife.

At the end of a few months the Baron de V—— and his wife were still living together in the same house, but in separate parts of it. Everybody pitied the Baronne, although she seemed to be quite resigned, and always stood up bravely for her husband. The most straight-laced of women could not find anything to cavil at in her friendship for young de R——, and all the trouble was put down to the mad passion of Monsieur de V——.

When, on behalf of Madame B——, the latter had made all the sacrifices it is possible for a man to make, his faithless mistress left Paris for the waters of Mont Dore, for Switzerland and Italy, on the plea of ill-health.

The commissary died of some internal disease, and was tended by his wife in his last illness with a care that was quite pathetic, to judge from the grief he seemed to feel at the thought of how much he had neglected her. It appears that he never suspected the share his wife had had in the circumstances that had been the cause of their separation.

This anecdote, one of a thousand that I might have selected, gives us some idea of the kind of service one woman may render another.

Faithless women are all alike ; from the words ‘ Do relieve me of my husband ’ down to the mortal disease which ends the drama it is ever the same old story. An incident or two, such as those that coloured the anecdote just quoted, may vary the tale ; but, on the whole, one account differs but little from another. A husband should mistrust every single friend his wife may have. The subtle stratagems of these de-

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ceitful creatures rarely miscarry, for they have as allies those two great enemies of man—his vanity and his passion.

III.—ON THE LOVER'S RELATIONS.

A man who would hasten to warn another that he is in danger of losing a thousand-franc note from his pocket-book, or even that he is losing his handkerchief, would think it mean to inform him that he is in danger of losing his wife. This apparently strange inconsistency may be explained as follows :—Since the law itself is forbidden to question the rights of marriage, man would seem to have even less right to exercise matrimonial supervision. In the restoring of a thousand-franc note to its owner there is some idea of obligation, on the principle of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.

But how are we to explain the fact that a bachelor never asks in vain for the help of a friend ? In the matter of deceiving a husband he can always rely on his friend's services. It is impossible for us to define the true nature of this assistance. A man who would not dream of helping a policeman to run to earth a murderer has no scruples whatever in taking a husband to the theatre, to the concert-room, or even to some house of ill-repute in order to clear the way for a friend who may be killed the day after in a duel, with the result either that a child is born in adultery, or two brothers are deprived of a portion of their inheritance because of their having to share it with an heir who might otherwise never have existed ; or, again, that three people are made miserable. It must be confessed that uprightness is an extremely rare virtue, and that the man who is most confident of its possession is generally entirely without it. Families have been divided against themselves, brothers have murdered brothers, and all because a friend has stood by and taken his share in what the world is pleased to call a ' frolic ' !

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Every man must have his hobby, whether it be hunting, or fishing, or cards, or music, or money, or the pleasures of the table. Your hobby will be to be a party to the trap set for you by your wife's lover, his invisible hand compelling either your friend's or his own, whether they like it or not, to play a part in the little play he has invented to drive you from your home or to force you to hand your wife over to him. A lover will, if need be, spend as many as two whole months in thinking out the trap.

I have seen even the most wide-awake of men succumb sooner or later to snares of this kind.

An old Normandy advocate dwelt in the little town of B——, where the regiment of the Chasseurs du Cantal were in garrison. A smart young officer was in love with the wife of this limb of the law, and it seemed likely that he would have to leave the town with his regiment without having had even a moment's private intercourse with his mistress. If it had turned out so, he would have been the fourth military man over whom the lawyer had triumphed. Leaving the dinner-table one evening at about six o'clock, the husband strolled to one of the terraces of his garden that commanded a good view of the surrounding country. The officers came up to say good-bye to him. Suddenly there shot up on the horizon flames as of some distant fire. 'Heavens! the barracks are on fire!' cried the Major, a rough old soldier who had been dining at the house. They all leaped to their horses; but the young wife laughed as she looked round and saw that she was alone, for her lover, hidden in a clump of trees, had whispered: 'It is only a haystack!' The whole thing was very cleverly worked, for an excellent scout was in attendance on the captain, and, with a delicacy rare enough in cavalry officers, the lover sacrificed a few minutes' happiness in order to rejoin the cavalcade, and return in the company of the husband.

Marriage is a duel, in which, if you would triumph

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over your adversary, you must watch the passing of every hour of the day and the night, for if you so much as turn your head, the lover's sword will pierce you to the heart.

IV.—THE LADY'S-MAID.

The prettiest lady's-maid I ever saw was one belonging to Madame V——y, who is to-day one of the most distinguished of the fashionable women of Paris, and is thought to be on very good terms with her husband. Mademoiselle Célestine's charms are so numerous that, to describe them, one would have to translate the whole of the thirty verses inscribed, it is said, on the Sultan's tomb, each of which is a faithful description of one of the thirty beauties of women.

'It is surely a proof of extreme self-confidence to keep so charming a creature!' said a lady to the mistress of the house one day.

'Ah! my dear, you will envy me my Célestine before you have done.'

'Then she must have very uncommon qualities. Perhaps she knows exactly how to dress you?'

'Oh, no! quite the contrary.'

'She is a good needlewoman?'

'She never touches a needle.'

'A faithful servant?'

'Of the kind that costs one more than the most cunningly unfaithful.'

'You astonish me. She is, perhaps, your foster-sister?'

'Not exactly. She is, as a fact, good for nothing; but, for all that, she is the most useful member of my household. If she stays with me ten years, I have promised her twenty thousand francs. It will be money well earned, I assure you;—and I shall not regret it!' added the young woman, with a significant nod.

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Madame V——y's friend understood.

When a woman has no very intimate friend, her maid is often her only resource, and the amount of help she can get from a maid, in trying to rid herself of her husband's love, is incalculable.

When, after ten years of married life, a man finds a young girl of sixteen or eighteen established in his house, whom he sees every day, fresh, attractively dressed, with a wealth of beauties that, as it were, defy him, an irresistible air of candour, eyes that are lowered as if half-afraid, an alluring timidity, and a knowledge of all that marriage means, maiden and wise-acre in one—how can he possibly resist such an enchantress (although it is true Saint Anthony did), and remain faithful to the vows he made to a stern-faced, peevish woman, who more often than not spurns his love? The husband who could with equanimity bear such warmth and such coolness would be a Stoic indeed. Whilst he sees a new field of pleasures opening out before him, the young innocent sees money, and his wife her liberty. It is simply an amicable family arrangement.

Your wife's ideas are, it would seem, similar to those entertained by our young exquisites with regard to the serving of their country. If they should happen to be called out to fight for it, they hire a man to carry their gun, to die in their stead, and as far as possible save them from all the disagreeableness of military service.

In similar transactions of married life, there is not a woman who would fail to put her husband in the wrong. I have observed that most women, with their usual tact, do not, as a rule, confide to their maids the whole secret of the part they mean them to play. They simply trust to nature, and they take care to make good use of the power which, through their knowledge of their secret, they have over the lover and his mistress.

Treachery of this kind on the part of the wife explains a great deal of what may seem odd in the behaviour of the married pair; but I have heard women

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discuss the dangers of this method of attack quite seriously ; they recognise the fact that a thorough knowledge is necessary, both of the husband and of the creature to whose arms they send him. More than one woman has fallen a victim to her own treachery.

Again, the more passionate the husband, the less does the wife dare to make use of her maid. A husband who is fairly caught in this trap must remember that he will never be able to reproach his wife for her conduct when she at length charges him with being too intimate with her maid, and packs her off with a child and an annuity.

V.—THE DOCTOR.

A woman desirous of obtaining an amicable separation from her husband finds one of her most powerful allies in the doctor. The services which he can render (mostly without his knowledge) are of such importance that there is hardly a house in France where he has not been carefully chosen—by the *wife*.

Doctors are so well aware of the great influence that women have on their reputation, that you seldom come across one who does not instinctively try to please them. A man of genius who has become famous doubtless no longer lends himself to the mischievous machinations of a wife, but he probably enters into them without knowing it, all the same.

A wise husband, profiting by the experiences of his youth, always chooses his wife's doctor himself. As long as his adversary does not realise how much help she may gain from a doctor who is on her side, she submits cheerfully ; but, later, when she has come to see that the charms she lavishes on the man have no effect, she chooses a favourable opportunity, and proceeds to inform her husband that she does not like the way the doctor treats her—and he is forthwith sent about his business. It comes to this : either a wife

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chooses her own doctor in the first instance, or she wins him over to her side, or she dismisses him.

But the latter rarely occurs, for most young married men only know beardless young doctors who do not seem to them in any way desirable, and thus it happens that Æsculapius is usually chosen by the mistress of the house.

One fine morning the doctor will come out of Madame's room, where she has been lying for a fortnight, and will proceed to say to you : ' I do not mean to say that Madame's health need offer you any serious anxiety ; but her prolonged sleepiness and general dissatisfaction with life, her tendency to lie on her back for days together, require careful attention. Her blood seems to be thickening ; she needs change of air. I advise you to send her to Barèges or Plombières.'

' Very well, doctor ; I will.'

And you let your wife go to Plombières. But she really goes there because Captain Charles is in garrison in the Vosges. She comes back looking very well ; the waters seem to have done her a world of good. She has written to you most affectionately every day. The tendency to recline has entirely disappeared.

There is in existence a little book, which was doubtless inspired by hatred (it was published in Holland), which contains very curious details of the manner in which Madame de Maintenon conspired with Fagon to rule Louis XIV.

One fine morning your doctor, just as Fagon did, will warn you that you are threatened with an apoplectic seizure, and must put yourself on strict diet. This piece of buffoonery (the book is lively enough in its way) is very likely the work of some courtesan. The title of it is *Mademoiselle de Saint-Tron*. It has been made use of by a modern author in a short play, entitled *Le Jeune Médecin* ; but he has given us some delightful scenes, and his play is far superior to the

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book (which, indeed, I only mention for the benefit of bibliophiles), and it is with pleasure that we observe that the work of our witty contemporary has effectively stopped us from quoting fragments of the older book, which would be to the glory of the seventeenth century.

When a doctor has become the dupe of a young and clever woman, he will often come to you and say : ‘ I do not want to frighten Madame, but if her health is at all precious to you, I recommand you to allow her to lead a perfectly calm and peaceful existence. The malady seems likely to go to her chest, and it can be dealt with more easily there ; but, all the same for that, she must have plenty of rest—the least agitation might move the seat of the malady to a more dangerous part. The birth of a child would, in her present condition, be fatal to her.’

‘ But, doctor——?’

‘ Yes, yes, I know.’

He laughs and takes his leave.

Like the rod of Moses, the doctor’s orders make and unmake generations. A doctor at one time restores a husband his privileges, and at another utterly deprives him of them. He treats your wife for diseases which she has not, in order to cure her of those she has, and you, all the time, are kept in complete ignorance ; for a doctor’s jargon is like the wafers in which they wrap up their pills.

An honest woman with her doctor is like a minister sure of his majority : she makes him order her rest, distraction, country-life or town-life, a course of the waters, horse or carriage exercise, just as she pleases.

She will send you away or welcome you to her side, just as the spirit moves her—at one time pretending to have a disease that necessitates a separate room ; at another surrounding herself with all the paraphernalia of an invalid,—an aged nurse, and stacks of phials and bottles,—and defying you from behind these ramparts with languishing airs. She will so belabour you with

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descriptions of her cough mixtures and soothing syrups, her fits of coughing, and her plasters and poultices, that your love will of necessity succumb, provided, that is to say, that all this pretended suffering has not destroyed that strange concomitant of your virtue which goes by the name of 'honour.'

In this manner your wife will establish vantage grounds for herself wherever you come into contact with the world, with society, or with life. You will find that everything is, as it were, in arms against you, and in the midst of a host of enemies you will be standing alone.

But let us for a moment imagine that you enjoy the possession of that rare treasure—a wife who is an orphan, without intimate friends and not of a religious turn of mind ; that your perspicacity enables you to see through all her lover's little traps ; that you still love your fair enemy with a love that empowers you to resist all the Martons in the world ; and, lastly, that your doctor is one of those famous men who have no time to listen to women's pretty speeches ; or that, if Æsculapius is intimate with your wife, at all events you have the good sense to demand a consultation from time to time, and call in an honest physician every time the favourite doctor chooses to order treatment that is disturbing to your peace of mind ;—even then, your position will be none too enviable ! You must always remember, whether you fall a victim to the allies or not, that as yet your adversary has not struck the final blow. The time is now drawing near when (if you are still holding out) your wife, having slowly enmeshed you in her toils as a spider entraps a fly, will begin to make use of the weapons that nature has bestowed on her, and that civilisation has perfected. Of such weapons the following meditation will treat.

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TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

THE VARIOUS WEAPONS.

A WEAPON may be defined as anything that wounds; and from this it would appear that perhaps the cruellest weapons that a man can use to strike his fellows are the feelings. Schiller, that brilliant and mighty genius, has revealed to us all the wonderful things human beings have done under the influence of their mental activities. That a thought may kill a man is the idea conveyed in the heart-rending scenes of *The Robbers*, where the poet shows us a young man wounding the heart of an older man so deeply, simply by the aid of the ideas with which his mind has become possessed, that in the end he deprives him of life. The time is perhaps not far off when science will lay bare the curious mechanism of our thoughts, and seize upon our feelings as they well up within us. Some devotee of the more remote sciences may discover that the intellectual organisation is but a kind of internal man who works out schemes and makes plans no less than the external man, and that the struggle between these two (invisible to our frail sight) is no less mortal than the war with fate to which we subject our weak bodies. But considerations of this kind properly belong to other studies, which will be published in good time; some of our friends are already familiar with one of the most important, the 'Pathology of Social Life, or Mathematical, Physical, Chemical, and Transcendental Meditations on Manifestations of Thought considered under all the forms afforded by the present state of Society, either the food we eat, or the houses we live in, or the way in which we walk, the knowledge we have gained on the diseases of animals; or, again, our speech and our conduct, &c., &c.'—these important

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matters are all discussed in this treatise. The aim of our little digression into the regions of metaphysics is to warn you that people in the higher ranks of society think and reason too acutely to allow of them to be attacked by other than intellectual weapons. One may come across tender and delicate souls in bodies that are hard and coarse ; on the other hand, there are souls of brass belonging to bodies that are lithe and flexible, graceful and alluring, charming enough to invite caresses. But you have only to stroke the external man, and the ' homo duplex,' as Buffon calls it, will soon disappear, and the sharp, jagged curves that lie beneath the surface will lacerate your hand.

This description of a particular class of beings such as we only hope you may be lucky enough to avoid in your life's journey, will give you some idea of what your wife may develop into. Every one of the tender sentiments which nature has implanted in her bosom will become a dagger. Daily and hourly will she stab you, and in the end you will be compelled to give in, your love slowly ebbing from every wound she makes.

It is the final battle, and hers is the victory.

In order that the three kinds of temperaments which are practically the types of woman's varied nature may be carefully distinguished, we will divide this meditation into three parts :—

- I. The Sick Headache.
- II. Affections of the Nerves.
- III. Modesty in its relation to Marriage.

I. THE SICK HEADACHE.

Women are for ever at the mercy of an overwrought sensibility, but we have shown that with the majority of them this delicacy is bound to receive rude shocks when they get married. (See the Meditations on the Fore-ordained and on the Honeymoon.) Are not most

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of the 'means of defence' employed by husbands nothing but traps laid to catch women?

There will come a moment during the Civil War when the woman will, in one sweeping survey, trace the entire history of her moral life, and will become incensed as she realises how greatly you have abused her feelings. In this case, whether it be from an innate thirst for vengeance (which we confess is to us inexplicable), or from an instinctive love of dominion, woman will rarely fail to discover some way of using this peculiar characteristic of hers against her husband.

First of all she proceeds, with admirable skill, to find out what chords vibrate most sensitively in her husband's heart; once she has discovered the secret, she eagerly takes advantage of it. Like a child who has been given a mechanical toy, and is led by curiosity to endeavour to find out how it works, she goes on until she has worn the heart-strings out, and, provided her designs seem to her to be succeeding, she continues to beat the machine about without the least anxiety as to whether it can bear such treatment.

If she happens to kill you, she mourns your loss with good grace, like the virtuous, excellent, sensible woman she is.

Your wife will take advantage of the generous sentiment that leads us to respect the weak and suffering. The man who will readily oppose a woman full of life and health is powerless before a weak and sickly one. If your wife has not been able to reach the goal to which she has been directing her secret designs by the various methods of attack already described, she will immediately seize upon this powerful weapon.

As a result of her new policy, you will find the young girl who, when you married her, was in her first bloom, and full of life and beauty, transformed into a pale and delicate-looking woman.

A sick headache is an affection offering infinite resources. It has no symptoms, therefore it is the

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easiest of all maladies to simulate ; all one has to do is to say simply, ' I have a headache.' No living person can give a woman the lie if she chooses to make such a remark—her head defies both touch and observation. The headache is, to our mind, the queen of maladies, at once the most pleasant and the most terrible weapon which women can employ. There are a few spirits, coarse and entirely without delicacy, who, having been initiated into women's wiles by the mistresses of their happy bachelor days, flatter themselves that they will not be caught in such a trap. All their carefully thought-out plans fall to the ground at the magic words, ' I have a headache ! ' Woe betide the husband who ventures to complain, or to reproach his wife, or make some innocent remark, or attempts to pit his strength against that ' *Il buondo cani* ' of marriage !

Picture to yourself a young woman reclining luxuriously on a sofa, her head lightly resting on one of the cushions, one hand hanging idly by her side, a book lying at her feet, and her glass of lime-tree flower water on a little table by her side. . . . Then picture a strapping young husband standing in front of her. He has been round the room five or six times, and each time he has turned on his heel the invalid has frowned slightly, trying in vain to make him understand that the least noise is too much for her. At last he plucks up courage enough to lodge his protest against her little ruse, saying, in a loud voice,—

' Have you really got a headache ? '

At these words the young woman raises her head ever so little, lifts an arm, and lets it fall back feebly, raises dull eyes to the ceiling, raises, in fact, all she can raise, and then, with a spiritless look in his direction, says, in a singularly feeble voice :—

' What else could it be ? Oh ! I could not suffer more if I were dying ! And that is all the consolation you offer me. It is easy to see that nature has not burdened men with the bringing of children into the

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world. Are you all egoists, all without feeling? You take us in the charm of our youth, fresh, rosy-cheeked, and slim. And when we have lost our bloom, and been deprived of nature's gifts in gratifying you, you never forgive us for having lost them. You rob us of our virtues and begrudge us our pains. You want to have children, so we have to spend our nights in tending them; child-bearing ruins our health and bequeaths us the worst of all maladies as a legacy. (Oh, what pain I am suffering!) Most wives suffer from headache, but yours ought to be exempt. . . . You only laugh at her pain, being totally without feeling. . . . For mercy's sake, stop walking about! I should not have thought it of you. Will you please stop the clock; the ticking goes right through my head! Thank you. Oh, how miserable I am! Haven't you got some scent about you? For pity's sake go, and leave me to suffer in peace; the smell will make my head burst.'

And what answer can he make? Does not a still, small voice within him cry out, 'But if she is suffering'? . . . So nearly all husbands quietly evacuate the field of battle, and from the corner of her eye the wife watches them walk out on tip-toe, and gently shut the door of the room, now sacred to her.

Sick headache, real or feigned, is now firmly established in your home; and it proceeds to play its part. On this theme a woman can play many variations, in many keys. By means of a headache a woman can drive her husband to despair. It seizes her when she likes, where she likes, for as long as she likes. There are headaches which last five days, or ten minutes, periodical or intermittent headaches.

One day you will find your suffering wife in bed, prostrate, with the blinds down. Her headache has imposed a general silence throughout the house, from the lodge where the concierge, thoughtless fellow, had been chopping wood, to the loft whence your stable-boy was innocently throwing straw into the yard. On the

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strength of this headache, you go out ; on your return you hear that Madame, too, has gone out !

A few minutes later she comes in looking fresh and rosy.

‘ The doctor called,’ said she, ‘ and advised me to take some exercise, and I feel so much better ! ’

On another occasion you happen to want to go to Madame’s room.

‘ Oh, please, sir,’ says the maid, in astonishment, ‘ my mistress has a headache ; I have never seen her so bad before ! We have just sent for the doctor.’

‘ You are fortunate to have so pretty a wife ! ’ said Marshal A—— to General R——

‘ Have ! ’ replied the latter. ‘ If my wife is mine for ten days in the year, it’s about all she is. These s——, these women, I should say, have always got a headache, or some ailment or other.’

A headache takes the place in France of the sandals which the confessor in Spain leaves at the door of the penitent’s room.

If your wife has a presentiment that your feelings towards her are becoming hostile, and wishes to make herself inviolable as the Charta, she starts playing what may be called a little ‘ headache concert.’ She goes to bed groaning ; she utters heart-rending little cries ; she makes a thousand-and-one graceful little movements, so graceful and easy that one is almost tempted to imagine that she has suddenly become devoid of bones.

Where is the man coarse enough to speak of his desires, desires that presuppose perfect health, to a woman who is ill ? Mere politeness enjoins silence, if nothing else does, and thus a woman can, through the medium of the all-powerful headache, put up over her bed a notice that has an effect similar to that of an announcement by the Comédie Française that a certain play has been postponed owing to the sudden indisposition of Mademoiselle Mars, which sends playgoers

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home again at once, since they had only been attracted by the thought of seeing her.

O headache, protectress of love, veritable tax on marriage, shield against which all marital desires fight in vain ! How is it that thou hast never been immortalised in the songs of lovers ? O fascinating headache ! O perfidious headache, blest be the head that first conceived thee ! Shame on the doctor who can cure thee ! Thou art the only evil that women bless, doubtless out of gratitude for the blessings thou showerest upon them. O perfidious headache ! O fascinating headache !

II.—AFFECTIONS OF THE NERVES.

There is a power greater than the headache ; and, to the glory of France be it said, this power is one of the most recent discoveries of the Parisian mind. As with all the most useful discoveries in Science or the Arts, the particular genius to whom we owe it is not known ; but it is certain that about the middle of the last century the ‘ vapours ’ or an ‘ attack of spleen,’ began to be quite a common thing in France. Thus, while Papin was applying the power of steam to problems in Mechanics, a French woman, unfortunately unknown, had the glory of bestowing on women the power of ‘ vapourising ’ their vital fluids. Before long the wonderful effect of the ‘ vapours ’ was tried on the nerves ; and thus was born the whole Science of Neurology. It has already led Phillips, and other talented physiologists, to the discovery of the nervous fluid and its circulation ; it may be that we are on the eve of detecting its organs and the secrets of its birth. Thanks, too, to certain external signs that have come under consideration, we seem likely to be able one day to penetrate into the mysteries of that hidden power of which we have already spoken more than

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once in this work—the power of the will. But we do not wish to encroach on the territory of medical philosophy. We are only considering the nerves and ‘vapours’ in their relation to marriage.

Nervous affections (the pathological term under which are included all the manifold affections of the nervous system) may be of two kinds, according to the use made of them by married women ; our Physiology has the loftiest disdain of medical classification. We only recognise :

(1) Classical Nervous Affections.

(2) Romantic Nervous Affections.

The Classical Affections have about them something warlike and spirited. They are as wild as witches, passionate as mænads, reckless as bacchanals—they take us back to ancient times.

The Romantic Affections are gentle and plaintive as a ballad sung among Scotch mists, pale as a young girl brought to an untimely end by love or—over-indulgence in dancing. They are eminently elegiac, and contain all the melancholy peculiar to the North.

A woman with black hair, bright eyes, healthy complexion, dry lips, and strong hands can be fiery and convulsive—a victim to the Classical Affections ; while a fair young woman, with white skin, may be subject to the Romantic. One is mistress of the empire of the nerves, the other of the empire of the vapours.

It often happens that a husband comes home and finds his wife in tears.

‘What is the matter, my darling?’

‘Nothing.’

‘But you are crying.’

‘I don’t know why I am crying. I feel sad. I have seen faces in the clouds, as I always do on the eve of some misfortune. I think I am going to die.’

She then speaks to him in low tones of the death of her father, her uncle, her grandfather, her cousin. She invokes their mournful shades ; suffering all that they

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ever suffered, attacked by all the diseases they ever had, she feels her heart beating violently and her liver becoming enlarged ; and the husband says to himself with a vapid smile,—

‘ I know very well where all this comes from.’

He tries to console her, but she gapes like a yawning grave, complains of her chest, begins to cry again, and begs him to leave her to her own sad thoughts. She tells him her last wishes, attends her own funeral as it were, buries herself, plants a weeping willow by her tomb, and, where he was ready to sing a joyful nuptial song, he finds a gloomy epitaph. His feeble attempt at consolation vanishes in an inky cloud.

There are women, and honest women too, who in this way get from their sympathetic husbands Indian shawls, diamonds, money to pay their debts and to purchase a box at the Bouffons ; but the ‘ vapours ’ are usually only employed as a final weapon in civil war.

A woman will make a weak spine or a delicate chest an excuse for seeking distraction in a gay life. Or, on the other hand, she will be indifferent about her dress, and will only go out because a dear friend—her mother or her sister—comes and endeavours to tear her from the sofa which is almost swallowing her up, and on which she lies day after day composing elegies. In fact, she does what she pleases and goes where she likes. Is she ever likely to meet with a husband sufficiently brutal to oppose her wishes, or prevent her from seeking what relief she can from such cruel ills ? Medical men have decided that the nerves are responsible for an enormous amount of suffering.

But it is in bed that the ‘ vapours ’ hold the strongest sway. In bed, when a woman was not got a headache, she will have the ‘ vapours ’ ; when she has neither the one nor the other, she will place herself under the protection of Venus—a myth, as you know.

Among the women who are ready to wage this war of ‘ vapours,’ there are some—fairer, more delicate, and

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more sensitive than the rest—who have the wonderful gift of tears. And how well they know how to use it ! They can weep when they like, how they like, and for as long as they like. Their method, a truly offensive one, consists in their being apparently patiently resigned to their lot, and the victories they gain are the more striking in that the victors remain all the time in perfect health.

If, in a moment of exasperation, the husband definitely announces his wishes on any particular subject, his wife regards him with an air of submission, lets her eyes fall, and is silent. This little bit of acting is sure still further to aggravate the husband. In matrimonial struggles of this kind he much prefers to hear his wife speak up for herself, for then she is sure to get over-excited, and lose her temper ; but this she never will do. Her silence worries him, and makes him in a sense remorseful, like a murderer who is doubly frightened at what he has done if his victim has offered no resistance ; he had hoped he might show fight. The husband then withdraws his remarks. His wife wipes her eyes and hides her handkerchief, but in such a way that he is bound to see that she has been crying. He is moved to pity, and begs his Caroline to say something—sympathy for her wretchedness makes him forget everything else ; thereupon she sobs out her words with all the eloquence of an inveterate chatterbox, and stupefies him with the jumble of ideas she jerks out between her sobs ; for a moment she is transformed into a ‘ clapper ’ or a mountain torrent !

French women, especially Parisian women, have a wonderful facility for inventing scenes of this kind, to which voice, sex, dress, by their very nature, lend a certain charm. How often does a wicked little smile take the place of tears on the ever-changing countenances of these adorable actresses, when they have so far moved their husbands that, in their passion, the latter have almost broken the thin silken cord of the wife’s

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stays, or have loosened the comb that keeps together the tresses that are always so ready to fall round her shoulders in a shower of golden ringlets ?

But stratagems such as these, which have their origin in our own times, must all give place to those of antiquity—to a powerful attack of ‘ nerves,’ the Pyrrhic dance of matrimony.

What fair hopes does not the lover see in those convulsive movements, those unnaturally bright glances, that well-rounded limb, which is put forth so gracefully. The woman rushes like a strong wind, shoots up like a flame of fire, is as flexible as a wave of the sea gliding over the white pebbles of the shore ; she succumbs to an excess of passion, she looks into the future and becomes a prophet ; but with all she sees the present very clearly, and strikes her husband to the ground terror-stricken.

As a rule a man is satisfied if he has seen his wife move three or four strong men, as though they were mere feathers, *once* ; he will not attempt to force her into submission a second time. He will be like a child that comes to feel great respect for all kinds of small springs, after having once pulled the trigger of a loaded gun. I have known a husband, a gentle, peace-loving man, keep his eyes glued on his wife, exactly as if he were in a lion’s cage, and had been told that his only hope of saving his life lay in his carefully refraining from in any way irritating the animal.

Genuine ‘ attacks of nerves ’ are, however, very fatiguing, and are daily becoming more rare—their place is being taken by the Romantic Affections.

Here and there one may come across a phlegmatic husband, of the kind whose love lasts for ever, because it is always so carefully regulated, who has, by sheer genius, triumphed over headache and nerves—but such are rare indeed. Faithful disciples of the blessed Saint Thomas, who wished to place his finger upon our Lord’s wounds, they are endowed with feelings of doubt and suspicion worthy of an atheist. Unmoved by the

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treacheries of headache or 'nerves,' they fix their attention on the scene that is being enacted, carefully watch the actress, and endeavour to think of something that will rouse her; and, having discovered the machine that works the scenery, they amuse themselves by gently kicking the balance-weight that keeps things in their place, and thus assure themselves of the unreality of the malady and the artificiality of the masquerade.

But whether a husband, by almost superhuman vigilance, does or does not escape from all these tricks and stratagems that an ungovernable love suggests to woman, he will certainly be conquered when she comes at last to use a certain terrible weapon, which she herself hesitates to take up before it is absolutely necessary—for no woman will destroy her dominion over her husband without strong feelings of reluctance. This weapon is tipped with poison, and as fatal as the knife of the executioner. We will consider it in the final section of this meditation.

III. MODESTY IN ITS RELATION TO MARRIAGE.

Before we talk of modesty, we ought to satisfy ourselves that it really exists. May it not perhaps be, as far as woman is concerned, nothing but coquetry? Or a feeling of indifference with regard to the body, as it might easily be thought to be when it is remembered that half the women in the world go about practically naked? Or a social chimera, as Diderot asserted it was, objecting that the sentiment disappeared in times of illness and misery? We can easily deal with all these suggestions.

An ingenious writer has recently asserted that men are far more modest than women. In support of his statement he brings forward a great many observations taken from surgery, from which it would appear that, if his conclusions are to carry any weight, men must first

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be put—for a certain space of time—into the hands of a surgeon.

Diderot's opinion is of even less consequence.

To deny the existence of modesty because it disappears in certain crises seems to us to be about as foolish as to deny the existence of life because of the coming of death.

Let us, then, grant that modesty is as common in one sex as in the other, and endeavour to find out what are its elements.

Rousseau would have us believe that it has its origin in the various arts with which the female tries to attract the male. This, again, seems to us to be an error.

The writers of the eighteenth century have, without doubt, rendered mankind very great services ; but their philosophy, based as it is on sensualism, is only skin-deep. They have considered the universe only from an external point of view ; and, for this reason alone, they have considerably retarded the moral development of man and the progress of a science which finds its first elements in the teaching of the Gospel, and which was in earlier days better understood by the fervent disciples of the Son of Man.

The study of the mysteries of the human mind, the discovery of the elements of the human soul, the estimate of its forces, the phenomena of its power, the full understanding of the faculty whereby it works independently of the body, conveying itself wherever it pleases, and perceiving without the aid of bodily organs—in short, the laws of the dynamics of the soul are the glorious portion this century has appropriated from out the treasure-mine of science. It may indeed be that we are at present only occupied in fashioning huge blocks upon which some powerful genius will one day build a glorious edifice.

Thus Rousseau's error was, in a sense, the error of his age. He has explained modesty in the light of the

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relation of one human being to his fellows, instead of explaining it in the light of the moral relations a human being has with himself. Modesty cannot be analysed any more than conscience can ; but we cannot go far wrong in calling it the conscience of the body, for while the one directs our feelings and guides the actions of our mind, the other directs our external movements. It is ourselves whom we injure when we disobey the laws of conscience and act contrary to our real feelings ; if we persist in disobedience, we come in the end to loathe both ourselves and our conduct. So is it with acts that are opposed to modesty in its relation to love, which after all is only the expression of all our feelings combined. If, as we have tried to prove, modesty is one of the vital attributes of marriage (see the Matrimonial Catechism in the Fourth Meditation), it is evident that immodesty must, in the long run, tend to dissolve a marriage. Now we maintain (it would require a long physiological dissertation to prove it) that, with woman, modesty is for the most part a mechanical virtue. Society, exaggerating everything to the advantage of the male, has developed this sense in woman from her infancy, and practically all her other feelings are gathered round it. And the moment this mighty veil, that softens every movement made at the instigation of her inherent brutishness, falls to the ground, woman disappears ;—soul, heart, mind, love, charm, all lie in ruins. In a situation in which the virginal purity of a daughter of the Otaïti shines forth in all its glory, the European woman becomes a thing horrible to look upon. A knowledge of this fact gives a woman a final and a fatal weapon with which to rid herself entirely of any love her husband may still happen to bear towards her. In her ugliness she is all-powerful, and the woman who was wont to take the greatest possible care in hiding from her lover the mysteries of her toilet, now takes a pleasure in showing herself to her husband in the most disadvantageous light possible.

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By means of this knowledge she will endeavour to drive you from her bed. Mrs. Shandy did not really mean to be spiteful when she told Tristram's father that he had not wound up the clock ; but your wife will take a savage delight in wasting time by asking unnecessary questions. Where once all was life and movement, now all is stillness and death. A love-scene has become a transaction which has to be discussed for hours—put into the hands of a lawyer almost. But we have already made it sufficiently clear elsewhere that there is always a comic side to these matrimonial crises, so that we need not here do more than refer to the felicitous ideas of Verville's and of Martial's Muse, with all their pleasant audacity and cynicism. The situation is too sad for laughter, but, at the same time, it is too comical for tears. When a woman has got as far as this, she and her husband are as far apart as the poles. And yet there are some women, so it is said, who, having been endowed with the art of always looking their best, can invest these contests with a charm at once lively and mirth-provoking, and who have so ' sharp a beak ' (to use Sully's phrase), that their whims and fancies and their mocking are quickly forgiven.

Where shall we find a man strong enough of soul to persist in his passion after ten years of married life, when his wife no longer loves him, and not only shows him that she does not every hour of the day, but spurns him, and is, in turn, crabbed, caustic, ill, fanciful, and even prefers to forego decency and cleanliness rather than be cheated of the pleasure of seeing her husband capitulate ;—who can, indeed, contemplate with equanimity the horror which indecency calls up in him ?

All this, dear reader, is surely more dreadful than the fact that—

XCII. Lovers know no modesty.

We have now come to the ' last infernal region ' of

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the divine comedy of marriage ; we are at the very bottom of hell.

There is something peculiarly awful about a married woman's position when unlawful love has cut her off from the duties of a wife and mother. As Diderot has so truly said, faithlessness in woman is as bad as unbelief in a priest—the mark of utter ruin ; it is the greatest social crime she can commit, for it includes all others. Either a woman profanes her love by still clinging to her husband, or she breaks all her chains, and gives herself up body and soul to her lover. The latter is the course she should choose, for the only possible excuse for her love is its depth and its overwhelming strength.

Thus her life is spent between the horns of a dilemma. Either she makes her lover wretched (supposing his passion sincere), or her husband, if he still loves her.

It is to this crisis in a woman's life that belong all the most peculiar characteristics of her conduct, all her strangest whims. To it also belong lies and treachery ; truly a shuddering thing to contemplate ! From a worldly point of view, the woman who embraces the miseries of virtue, and spurns the felicities of wickedness, certainly has reason on her side. And yet, with nearly all of them, one half-hour of ecstasy outweighs all the suffering of the future and whole centuries of anguish. If the instinct of self-preservation, the fear of death, will not stop them, what can be hoped from the law, which only sends them for two years to the Madelonnettes ? O sublime infamy ! But when we remember that the object of these sacrifices is one of our own brothers, a man with whom we would not trust our money if we had any, who buttons his coat in the same way as we all do, there is surely something so ludicrous in it that our laughter, as it leaves the Luxembourg, travels right through Paris, and disturbs a donkey browsing at Montmartre !

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It may seem strange that we should have raised so many questions on this subject of marriage; but it must be remembered that marriage affects not one human life, but two; and, just as in a lottery, the addition of a single number in the raffle multiplies the chances a hundredfold, so one life, when joined to another, multiplies to a tremendous extent the chances of human life, already so many and so various.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE FINAL SYMPTOMS.

THE author has met with so many people in the world with a perfect mania for knowing the right time, and the mean time, for possessing watches with second-hands, and for strict punctuality, that he has considered this meditation too essential to the peace of mind of the husband to allow of its being omitted. It would be unkind not to furnish men who have a passion for knowing the time with a compass wherewith to follow the final variations in the matrimonial zodiac, and tell the exact moment of the appearance on the horizon of the sign of the Minotaur.

A treatise on 'How to read the Matrimonial Clock' would fill a volume, and contain many subtle and delicate observations. I must confess that, owing to my youthfulness, I have only been able as yet to collect a few of the final symptoms; but I am justly proud to be able to say, as I draw towards the end of my enterprise, that I have opened up new subjects of research for those that come after me; and that, though my subject is a well-worn one, the last word has by no means been said upon it. I will therefore now set before you, just as they come into my mind, an informal list of 'symptoms,' which I hope later to re-arrange and reduce to a complete system. In case I should be forestalled in this meritorious undertaking, I think it only

THE FINAL SYMPTOMS

right to point out, at the risk of being charged with aggressiveness, that these symptoms fall naturally into two classes. Indeed they are necessarily of two kinds: those referring to one-horned minotaurs, and those referring to two-horned. The one-horned is the less harmful animal—the symptoms in this case refer to lovers confining themselves to platonic love, or at least to love that leaves no traces of its existence behind it; the two-horned minotaurs represent real wickedness and its fruits.

We have marked with an asterisk those symptoms that seem to us to belong to the latter.

MINOTAURIC OBSERVATIONS.

I*. When a woman, having been separated from her husband for a long time, rather overdoes the rôle of trying to entice him back to her, she is only acting up to the sailors' saying: 'Le pavillon couvre la marchandise.'

II. One of her friends comes up to a woman at a ball, and says:

'Your husband seems to have plenty of brains.'

'Do you think so?'

III. Your wife thinks it is time for the child to go to school—hitherto she would not hear of being separated from him.

IV*. In Lord Abergavenny's divorce case, his valet gave evidence that: 'Lady Abergavenny had such a repugnance for everything that belonged to my lord, that she would often go so far as to burn any little knick-knacks that had been touched by him.'

V. If a lazy woman suddenly becomes energetic, if a woman who has in the ordinary way a horror of learning begins to study a new language—in fact, any great change in a woman's character is a reliable symptom.

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VI. A thoroughly happy woman does not go into society.

VII. A woman who has a lover is always very indulgent.

VIII*. If a husband gives his wife 300 francs a month for dress, and she spends at least 500 and does not owe anybody a sou, then he may be certain that he is being robbed, in the night, by an armed man, who carries a ladder, but—it is not a case of burglary.

IX*. Husband and wife sleep in the same room, and Madame is for ever being ill; they agree to sleep separately, and she immediately appears to be enjoying radiant health: this is an awful symptom!

X. A woman who has never been in the habit of troubling much about her appearance suddenly becomes extremely careful and dainty in her dress. The minotaur is at the bottom of it!

XI. 'Ah, my dear, I know of no greater misfortune than not being understood.'

'Yes, but when one *is*!'

'But it so seldom happens!'

'That is true.'

'It is indeed a great joy; but remember that there is only one person in the world capable of understanding you, not two.'

XII*. When a woman takes proceedings against her husband, the end has come.

XIII. I say to her:

'Where have you been, Jeanne?'

'I have been to your godfather to fetch your plate.'

'Good! She is mine still!' say I to myself.

Next year I ask the same question.

'I have been to fetch our plate.'

'Still mine.'

But later on her answer to the question is:

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‘ You want to know everything just as if you were really some one of importance—and you haven’t three shirts to your back. I have been to my friend to fetch my plate, and I stayed and had supper with him.’

‘ A garbled statement ! ’ is my mental comment.

XIV. Always distrust a woman who talks about her virtue.

XV. Grave doubts were held with regard to the condition of the Duchesse de S——, and she was told that Monsieur le Duc wished to see her again.

‘ Is he there ? ’

‘ Yes.’

‘ Then let him wait ! He can come in with the sacrament.’

This story, given here as a type of minotauric anecdotes, is related by Chamfort.

XVI*. There are women who endeavour to persuade their husbands that they owe certain duties to certain people.

‘ I am sure you ought to go and see Monsieur So-and-So. We must ask Monsieur So-and-So to dinner.’

XVII. ‘ Come, put your shoulders back, and try to cultivate a better manner ! See how Monsieur So-and-So walks ! How well he dresses ! ’

XVIII. When a woman mentions the name of a certain man only twice a day, the nature of her sentiments may not be quite clear ; but three times—then—— !

XIX. When a woman shows a guest, who is neither lawyer nor minister, right to the door of his room, she is acting very indiscreetly.

XX. That day is ominous on which a husband fails to understand the motive of some action of his wife’s.

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XXI*. The woman who allows herself to be taken by surprise deserves her fate.

It is easy to decide how a husband should behave, when he has been made aware, by some 'final symptom' or other, of his wife's unfaithfulness. Only two courses are open to him : resignation or vengeance ; there is no middle course. If he decide on vengeance, it must be complete vengeance. He is no better than a simpleton if he does not leave his wife for good and all. If husband and wife consider themselves capable of remaining friends (in the sense that two men may be friends) there is something extremely odious in his making the wife feel the advantage that he has over her.

I give below several anecdotes, most of which have not hitherto been published, which show clearly in what a variety of ways a husband may act.

Monsieur de R—— used to sleep with his wife once a month, and as he left her in the morning he would say to himself :

' Here I am again ! Now come what come may ! '

This shows us a state of great depravity in conjunction with a high opinion of conjugal ' policy.'

A certain diplomatist, seeing his wife's lover arriving, left his study, and went to her, and said, ' Mind you don't fight ! '

Here we have good-humour.

Monsieur de B—— was once asked what he would do if, after a very long absence, he found his wife enccinte.

' I would take my dressing-gown and slippers across to her room.'

A very lofty-minded reply.

' Madame, if this man ill-treats you when you are alone together it is your own fault ; but I will not allow him to behave badly in my presence, for if I did I should be forgetting what is due to myself.'

In this there is true nobility.

The magistrate who put his square cap on the foot

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of the bed while the guilty pair were asleep reached the sublime.

It may be seen from these anecdotes how numerous are the ways in which a husband can take his revenge.

In one of the books written for the purpose of earning his livelihood, Mirabeau has admirably described the gloomy resignation of an Italian woman who was condemned by her husband to perish with him in the marshes of Maremmes.

FINAL AXIOMS.

XCIII. To come upon your wife in the arms of her lover, and suddenly kill them both, is not revenge—it is the kindest service you can render them.

XCIV. The lover is the husband's finest instrument of revenge.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

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A MATRIMONIAL crisis nearly always ends in a catastrophe. After the catastrophe all is calm and peaceful. Your resignation (if you choose to be resigned) arouses bitter feelings of remorse in the heart of both wife and lover; for their very happiness tells them the extent of the wrong done to you. Although you may not be aware of it, you make a 'shadowy third' in all their pleasures. The light of goodness and of charity that glimmers in every human heart is not easily put out; and the two souls that torture you are the very two that wish you well.

In one of the friendly little talks that serve as a link between one joy and another, and are as it were mental embraces, your wife will say to your 'Sosie':—

'Auguste, I would really like to see my husband happy, for he is a good man at heart: if he were only

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my brother instead of my husband ! But he loves me ; and it wearies me to death.'

' Yes, he is a good fellow.'

You appear in the eyes of your bachelor friend as a man worthy of respect, and he wishes to compensate you as far as possible for the wrong he is doing you ; but your air of proud disdain puts him out of countenance.

As a matter of fact, as soon as the minotaur has set foot in the house, the husband resembles nothing so much as an inexperienced and nervous actor. It is difficult to preserve one's dignity in so foolish a position, but generous characters are not as yet so rare that we cannot find one among them capable of passing as a model husband.

From this time on you will find that you are being captivated, gradually and almost insensibly, by the charms your wife lavishes upon you. She will, upon all occasions, adopt a loving manner. A charming and peaceful home-life is one of the first of the compensations that tend to make the minotaur less odious. Since it is in man's nature to school himself to the hardest conditions of human life, you will, in spite of a nobility of sentiment that never quite deserts you, become, under the influence of the fascinations that surround you, utterly incapable of denying yourself the enjoyment of the ' bitter sweets ' to which your position entitles you.

Let us suppose that matrimonial misfortune has befallen a ' gourmand.'

Naturally he will seek consolations that are to his taste. The character of his pleasure will be altered, and he will seek satisfaction in other senses of his being.

One day, having stood for a long time on his way home before the window of one of Chevet's savoury establishments, debating whether he could possibly afford a hundred francs for a luscious *pâté de foies gras*, he is amazed, on reaching the house, to see a *pâté*

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perched on the sideboard in the dining-room. He wonders for a moment if it is not some gastronomical delusion. Still wondering, he walks over to him (a pâté is always a 'him') with a firm step, whinnying for all the world like a horse, as he sniffs the truffles through the golden crust; twice he leans over it, first on one side, then on the other; every little ornament on the treasure seems endowed with a soul; he rehearses the delights of the feast he will have, and in this ecstasy, which is quickly followed by feelings of regret, he goes to his wife.

'My dear, we really cannot afford to buy pâtés——'

'But it hasn't cost us anything!'

'Oh! Ah!'

'Monsieur Achille's brother sent it us.'

You perceive Monsieur Achille. He bows, and seems happy that you have accepted the pâté. You glance at your wife, and she blushes; you pass your hand through your beard, and stroke your chin once or twice, and, as you do not say 'Thank you,' the lovers conclude that the pâté has been accepted as a compensation.

The Government has suddenly changed hands, and a state councillor (a married man) who was hoping he might be offered a Director-Generalship, is now afraid that he will be given his congé, since all the existing ministers are hostile to him, and, in despair, he has become 'constitutional.' Foreseeing his dismissal, he has betaken himself to Auteuil to seek consolation of a friend, who will probably speak to him of Horace and Tibullus. On his return, he finds the table laid for a dinner party, and the house with an air about it of preparation for a gathering of influential people.

'Really, my dear,' says he angrily as he enters the room where his wife is putting the finishing touches to her toilet, 'I see no signs of your usual tact in to-night's performance. You have chosen a strange time for a dinner party, and to let twenty people know——'

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‘That you are Director-General!’ cries she, handing him a royal document.

He is dumbfounded, takes the letter, turns it over and over, and finally breaks the seal. Then he sits down and begins to read.

‘I knew perfectly well,’ says he, ‘that justice would be done to me in the end, whichever party happened to be in power.’

‘Yes, dear. Monsieur de Villeplaine spoke of you in very high terms to his Eminence the Cardinal, to whom he is——’

‘Monsieur de Villeplaine?’

And he is so very wealthy a ‘compensation’ that the husband, with a true Director-General’s smile, adds:—

‘Hang it, my dear! Why, it is a little affair of yours then?’

‘Surely you bear me no ill-will? Adolphe is genuinely attached to you.’

One evening a poor husband, kept at home by a storm, or perhaps tired of spending his evenings night after night at the theatre or in a café, with friends who bore him, finds himself after dinner following his wife to her boudoir. He throws himself into an easy-chair and awaits his coffee with the air of a sultan, saying to himself, ‘After all, she *is* my wife!’

The syren makes him his favourite drink very carefully, sugars it for him, tastes it, and hands it to him; and with a smile hazards a little jest—humble and dutiful slave that she is—to clear the frown from the brow of her lord and master. Up to now he had always thought his wife a fool; but when he hears some witty little sally, he raises his head, as a dog does who scents a hare, and wonders where the devil she got *that* from! ‘It must have been chance!’ From his lofty heights he makes a suitable and piquant reply. Madame parries it, and the conversation becomes no less lively than entertaining, and, with all his superiority, the

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husband is fairly astonished at his wife. His mind seems to be full of the most varied knowledge ; she uses just the right words, seizing on a remark tactfully and delicately, and dealing with it in a way that is both charming and unexpected ; in fact, she is not the same woman. She notices the effect she is making, and to revenge herself for his previous disdain, as well as to do justice to the lover who has enriched her with these intellectual treasures, she literally sparkles with animation. The husband, being in a frame of mind to appreciate to the full a compensation that seems likely to have a great effect on his future, is led to think that passion in woman is perhaps only another word for culture.

And now we come to a compensation which soothes the husband's vanity perhaps more than any other.

Some ten years usually elapse between the first appearance of the 'final symptoms' and the 'peaceful era' with which we are soon to deal. Before the worthy couple have signed the treaty which brings reconciliation between the female and her lawful master, the male, and marks the matrimonial 'restoration'—before, in other words, the ' yawning chasms of revolution ' (to use an expression of Louis XVIII.) have been closed—an honest woman is almost sure to have had more than one lover. Anarchy has its inevitable phases. The fiery rule of the tribunes is followed by that of sword and pen ; few lovers remain constant for the whole ten years. We may take it for granted that a woman has not done her duty by Physiology—or by the Devil—if she has only made three men happy ! It sometimes happens that during a rather long 'interregnum,' either from caprice or because it is really a temptation, or because the novelty of the thing attracts her, a woman tries to captivate her husband a second time.

Picture to yourself the charming Madame de T—— (the heroine of the meditation on 'Strategem') saying coyly : 'I never knew you could be so amiable !' and

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passing from one flattery to another—alluring, arousing curiosity, joking, fanning her husband's desires, and generally making him feel proud of himself. Then follows the 'night of compensation.' She bewilders her husband, describing, in the words of some great traveller, the wonders of the countries she has visited, mingling many languages in her talk. Passionate images of the East, Spanish sayings, vivid and original, crowd one on the other. She displays her treasures with the archness of a true coquette ; she is ravishing—and you have only just discovered it ! True woman that she is, she has cultivated a manner that is peculiarly her own. You received from the hands of Hymen a shy and simple maiden ; the generous bachelor has given you ten charming women—we have mentioned them before in the meditation on 'First Symptoms.' The Goddesses gather round your bed, laughing, and sporting with its silken hangings. *La Phénicienne*, deftly balancing herself, casts her crown upon you ; *la Chalcidiseuse* takes your breath away with her lovely little white feet ; *L'Unelmane*, speaking the language of fair Ionia, offers you treasures of happiness in the profound study which she causes you to make of a single sensation !

Heart-sick at having spurned such charms, and no doubt a little weary of the priestesses of Venus, who are at least as base as honest women are, a husband will sometimes, out of sheer gallantry, hasten the moment of reconciliation. He gathers in his new-found happiness with perhaps even more pleasure than his first harvest of delight. The minotaur took from him gold, but he has given him diamonds in return.

We must stop for a moment to enunciate a fact of the very highest importance : a man can have a wife without possessing her. Up to now you have probably not received anything from your wife ; to make the union perfect, a period of celibacy was wanted. How otherwise to explain this miracle we do not know. . . . Alas ! my brothers, we did not make our natures.

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There are many other compensations by means of which a noble and generous-hearted young bachelor may obtain forgiveness at the hands of the husband. I once witnessed one of the finest acts of reparation that it is possible for a lover to make to the 'minotaurised' husband.

On a hot summer evening of the year 1817 there entered one of Tortoni's salons a young man of my acquaintance. Notwithstanding his splendid attire, he presented a modest appearance. Not long after, a charming woman, perfectly dressed, descended from an elegant barouche that had drawn up in front of the house, encroaching, in the usual aristocratic manner, on the territory of the passers-by. Observing that she was condescending to enter one of the cool boudoirs kept sacred to the fashionable world, the young bachelor came quickly forward, and gave his arm to his sovereign, while the husband followed, with two lovely little children. The two lovers were quicker than the father and reached the cool room, with its huge blocks of ice, before he did. As he walked across the entrance hall the husband knocked against a dandy, who chose to take offence at his clumsiness. That started a quarrel which, to judge from the high words that passed, looked as though it might become serious. When the dandy was on the point of lowering himself by an action unworthy of any self-respecting person, our friend the bachelor intervened; he arrested the arm of the dandy, and, taking him utterly by surprise, knocked him down. It was superb.

'Sir?' he said to the aggressor.

His 'sir' is one of the finest speeches I have ever heard. It was as though the man had said, 'This father of a family belongs to me; I have taken possession of his honour, and it rests with me to defend it. I know my duty; I am his substitute, and I fight for him.' The young wife also behaved splendidly. Pale and trembling, she seized her husband's arm (he was still shouting

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at the dandy), and without a word dragged him and the children to the carriage. She was a typical example of the woman of high society who never allow the violence of their emotions to go beyond the bounds of decency.

‘Oh, Monsieur Adolphe!’ she cried, seeing her friend step gaily into the carriage.

‘It was nothing, Madame. He is a friend of mine. We have embraced, and——’

But next morning the brave young bachelor received a sword-wound that endangered his life, and kept him to his bed for six months. Husband and wife both looked after him, in the most touching manner. And what compensations he had! Several years later an old uncle of the husband, whose opinions did not happen to agree with those of our young friend, and who was feeling a little sore with him after some political discussion, made up his mind to get him expelled from the house. He even went so far as to tell his nephew that he must choose between his inheritance and sending the impertinent fellow about his business. Thereupon the worthy stockbroker said to his uncle:

‘Surely you would not have me guilty of ingratitude? The young man would lay down his life for you if I asked him. He saved my reputation, he went through fire for me, he takes my wife off my hands, he brings me clients, he has procured for me nearly all the transactions connected with the Villèle loan—I owe him my life, and he is the father of my children—we must not forget that!’

The above compensations may be looked upon as examples of complete and full compensations—unfortunately there are other kinds. There are negative compensations, false compensations, and compensations that are both negative and false. I once knew an old man who had a passion for gambling. His wife’s lover came and played with him nearly every evening. He knew how to make the game delightful, and regularly

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lost about a hundred francs a month; but Madame gave them him back again! In this case the compensation was a false one.

Let us suppose you are a peer, with a family of daughters. Your wife is suddenly brought to bed of a son!

The compensation is a negative one.

Again, the child who is to hand your name down to posterity resembles his mother, and Madame la Duchesse persuades you that he is your child. The negative compensation is now a false one as well.

Seeing that so many husbands slowly but surely arrive at the time of conjugal peace, and wear so gracefully the imaginary insignia of matrimonial authority, there can be no doubt that their philosophy is supported by the 'comfort' of certain compensations.

A few years more and the couple enter upon the last phase of that artificial existence to which their union has condemned them.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

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I HAVE in a friendly spirit accompanied marriage through all the various stages of its strange existence, and I have, as it were, grown old with the household which I have treated of from its infancy down to the present time.

After having, at any rate mentally, experienced all the ardour of man's earlier passion; after having sketched, however imperfectly, the principal events of married life; after having tilted at so many women, and worn myself out in combating so many imaginary characters, after having assisted at so many struggles, I must confess that I feel a weariness creeping over me, a weariness which seems to cast a shadow over everything. I seem to have a cold, to be wearing green spectacles, to have trembling hands, and it seems to me

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that I shall have to spend the rest of my life and use the rest of my book in making excuses for the follies of my youth.

I can see myself surrounded with grandchildren that are not mine, seated by a wife whom I never married. I can feel wrinkles on my brow. I am standing in front of a fire that crackles at me spitefully—I put my hand to my heart in horror, and ask myself :

‘ Has it withered ? ’

Nothing can deceive me—I am as wily as an old attorney, and I never admit anything that has not been attested by two good false witnesses, as Byron puts it. No face can cheat me ; I am sad and gloomy ; I know the world, and it has, alas ! no longer any illusions for me.

I have been deceived in those whom I believed to be my truest friends. I look my wife through and through, and everything I say to her is as a dagger that cleaves us still further asunder. I am in a horrible state of apathy. This, then, is the peace of old age ! An old man who has within him the very graveyard that will soon hold his body ! All he can do is to accustom himself to the cold. Man dies, so philosophers tell us, by inches, and thus cheats even Death of his due. Is that which death takes from his fleshless hands really life at all ?

Oh, to die young, while the heart still throbs ! Surely an enviable lot ! As the poet sings, to die young is ‘ to preserve all one’s illusions,’ to be entombed like an Eastern potentate, with his precious stones and his treasures and all his fortune around him. How many acts of mercy ought we not to attribute to the kind and loving spirit that breathes on all things here below ! Indeed, the care that nature takes in depriving us of our garments one by one, in impoverishing our souls by gradually weakening our powers of hearing, sight, and touch, by stopping the circulation of our blood, and allowing it to congeal so that we are as insensible of the approach of death as we were of life itself ; this

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motherly care she takes of our frail bodies, she bestows also on our feelings and on that double existence which is entered upon in marriage. First does she send to us Confidence, and she, holding out her hands, says, 'See, I am thine for ever !' Then there follows, with languid steps, Supineness, who turns her fair head away to yawn, like some young widow compelled to listen to a prosy minister, who is in the act of offering her a pension. Then comes Indifference ; she stretches herself at full length on a sofa, and forgets to pull down the dress which in the days of her chaste love she used to raise so very little. She casts a look—which cannot be described as either modest or immodest—at the marriage couch ; and, if she has any wish at all, it is to pluck the green fruit in the pattern of the carpet of her room. And, finally, Experience—philosophical experience of life in general—appears, with gloomy looks of disdain, pointing the finger of scorn at results, instead of at causes ; she is the personification of that experience which has been gained by an easy victory, not by a fiery struggle. She can compute the rents that are due from the farmers, and calculate an infant's dowry ; she materialises everything. With a stroke of her wand life becomes narrow and empty ; once everything was in the molten state, now it is all hard metal. Pleasure reigns no longer in our hearts—a sentence of doom has been passed upon it ; it was but a sensation, a passing phase ; what the soul now wants is some settled feeling ; the only happiness that lasts is that which lives in absolute tranquillity, in regular meals, regular sleep, and the exercise of the grosser faculties.

'This is horrible !' cried I, 'I am still young, and have long to live ! Perish all the books in the world before I abandon my illusions !'

I left my study, and fled to Paris. As soon as I saw a pretty face I knew I was not yet old. A single glance at the first beautiful and well-dressed woman I encountered was sufficient to break the spell to which

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I was becoming a victim. No sooner had I reached the garden of the Tuileries, whither I had turned my steps, than I perceived the prototype of the matrimonial crisis to which the present work has now brought us. I may have endeavoured to characterise, idealise, personify marriage, as I conceived it, but heaven itself could create no more perfect symbol than the one before me.

Picture to yourself a woman of about fifty, clad in a coat of reddish-brown merino, leading a pretty little spaniel, and giving an arm to a man in knee-breeches and black silk stockings, and a hat jauntily turned up at the brim, and displaying a snow-white pigeon's wing on either side. A little pig-tail, about as thick as a penholder, resting on a neck that was (as far as one could see under the turned-up collar of the shabby coat) of a yellowish hue, and rather thick. The pair walked with the proud gait of an ambassador, and the husband, who must have been seventy, if a day, stopped politely whenever the dog wished to say, 'How-do-you-do?' to a friend. I hurried on, and endeavoured to get away from this living image of one of my meditations, when, to my astonishment, I recognised the Marquis de T——, the friend of the Comte de Nocé, who had for a long time past owed me the end of the interrupted anecdote given in the seventeenth meditation.

'I have the honour to present Madame la Marquise de T——,' said he.

I bowed low to a lady with a pale, wrinkled face, and a forehead adorned with flat curls placed round it in a semi-circle, which, so far from causing any pleasing delusion, only added still further to the disenchantment of the furrowed wrinkles. She was slightly rouged, and looked for all the world like some old provincial actress.

'I cannot see, sir, what you can have to say against a marriage such as ours,' said the old lady.

'The Roman laws condone it!' I replied, with a laugh.

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The Marquise gave me a look, uneasy as well as disapproving, which seemed to say : ' Have I come, at my age, to be no better than a concubine ? '

We sat down together beneath the shade of a thick grove of trees, planted at the end of the high terrace that looks over the Place Louis XV. in the direction of the Garde Meuble. Autumn was already colouring the trees and scattering its crown of yellow leaves at our feet, but the sun still gave out a gentle warmth.

' Well, is the great work finished ? ' asked the Marquis, in the unctuous tones peculiar to the older aristocracy, and a supercilious smile.

' Very nearly, sir,' I replied. ' I have reached the philosophic situation to which you two seem to have come, but I assure you that I——'

' That you are still on the look-out for new ideas ? ' he added, helping me to finish the sentence.

' Well,' he continued, ' you may assert boldly that when a man arrives at the winter of his life, he comes in the end (if he is at all capable of thinking things out for himself) to deny the existence of that love in which our foolish illusions would have us believe.'

' What ! do you deny the existence of love the day after marriage ? '

' Yes, certainly ; the day after is the very day to deny it. My marriage is a speculation,' he whispered in my ear ; ' I have bought the attention and the looking after that I need, and I am certain to obtain all that my old age asks for, for I have made a will bequeathing my whole fortune to my nephew, and my wife will be rich only so long as I am alive ; you can understand that——'

I threw so keen a glance at the old man that he wrung my hand, and said :

' You seem to have a good heart (but one can never be too sure), so I may as well tell you that I have arranged a nice little surprise for her in my will,' he added gaily.

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‘Be quick, Joseph!’ cried the Marquise, going towards a servant who was bringing a thick silk-lined coat; ‘your master has perhaps caught cold already.’

The old Marquis put on the coat, and buttoned it up, and, taking my arm, led to me a part of the terrace where the sun was shining brightly.

‘In your work,’ said he, ‘you have probably spoken of love from a young man’s point of view. Well! if you would acquit yourself of the duties which are imposed on you by the word ec—elec——’

‘Eclectic,’ said I, smiling, for he never had been able to pronounce this word.

‘I knew the word perfectly well,’ he replied. ‘If, then, you would perform your vow of “electism,” you must communicate to the world a few of the ideas on love which I, an old man, will now enunciate; I will let you take the credit of them—I wish to bequeath you something, and this is all that I have to spare.’

‘No money legacy can equal a legacy of ideas, especially if they are good ones! Gladly will I listen to what you have to say.’

‘Love does not exist.’ As he spoke, the old man looked at me. ‘It is not even a sentiment; it is simply an unfortunate necessity lying mid-way between the needs of the body and the needs of the soul. Let us, for a moment, espouse the ideas of our youth, and endeavour to reason on behalf of this social malady. I take it that love can only be looked on as being either a necessity or a sentiment?’

I bowed my assent.

‘Considered in the light of a necessity,’ continued the old man, ‘love is the last thing that the body feels and the first it can relinquish. We begin to love at the age of twenty, roughly speaking, and we leave off loving at fifty. How many times should we, during these thirty years, feel the necessity to love if we were not impelled to it by what I am tempted to call the incendiary morals of our cities and by our habit of pass-

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ing our lives in the company not of one woman, but of many? What is our duty towards the preservation of the race? There are as many children in the world as there are mammals—for every one that dies, another lives. If, therefore, children were always honestly begotten, and never otherwise, what would become of nations? A population of thirty millions is more than France can stand; it can only undertake to keep ten million from misery and starvation. Remember that China, so we are told, is reduced to drowning its infants. All superfluous pleasure is not only merely the outcome of lust, but also, as I shall show presently, an immense loss to mankind. Now, compare this lack of energy and of staying power with the perpetual want felt in the other conditions of our existence. Nature questions us constantly concerning our real needs, while, on the other hand, she absolutely refuses to sanction the excesses we commit in the name of love. It seems, then, as if it were the very last necessity we were likely to feel, and the only one we can neglect with impunity. Love is a luxury, just as lace and diamonds are luxuries. Again, when we come to examine it in the light of a sentiment, we find we must consider it as being either a matter of pleasure or of passion. First, we will analyse pleasure. Human affections are based on two leading principles—attraction and repulsion. We are attracted towards that which soothes our instincts of self-preservation, repelled by that which is prejudicial to those instincts. Anything that in any way agitates our organism makes us feel conscious of our existence; and that consciousness is pleasure. Pleasure thwarted is desire. The latter is a unique element, and all our passions are only modifications of one and the same thing; further, the habit of pleasure-seeking almost invariably engrosses us so entirely that we form no others. Love is the least poignant and the least enduring of our pleasures. For on what does it depend? In the possession of a beautiful body?

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With money you can in one evening purchase as many beautiful slaves as any one could wish to have, and by the end of a month the feeling that urged you to buy them will be dead and buried. Or does the pleasure of love depend on something else? Do you love a woman because she is well-dressed, elegant, rich, has a carriage, or plenty of credit? That is not love, but vanity, avarice, egoism. Do you love her because she is clever and witty? If so, it only shows that you have a feeling for letters.'

'But,' said I, 'love only reveals its treasures to those who are prepared to give up their thoughts, their fortune, their feelings, their souls, their lives, their ——'

'Oh! oh! oh!' grumbled the old man; 'I ask you to name me seven men in all France who have sacrificed to a woman, not indeed their lives, for that does not mean much—the tariff of human life was never under Napoleon higher than twenty thousand francs, and there are at this moment in France two hundred thousand brave men who are ready to give their lives for two inches of red ribbon—but seven men who have sacrificed a sum of ten million francs to a woman; they would far rather sleep with the money in solitary state, if only for a single night. Dubreuil and Phméja are types that are even rarer than Mademoiselle Dupuis and Bolingbroke. So we are reduced to thinking the sentiment must proceed from unknown causes. Now let us consider love as a passion. It is the last and the most contemptible of all our passions. It promises everything, and fulfils nothing. Tell me if you will of revenge, hatred, avarice, gambling, ambition, fanaticism! These are virile passions, passions that will never die. They make sacrifices daily that love never dreams of making.—And now,' he continued, 'imagine that you have abjured love. Immediately you are freed from disturbance, care, anxiety, freed from the little petty passions that waste our strength. You live a happy, peaceful life, and your influence is socially far greater than it was before. All

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men who have at one time or other of their lives had the power of influencing others, have only gained that power by divorcing themselves from this thing we call "love." What a magic power does a man gain, what intellectual treasures, and what healthy, happy years of life, if he sets aside all human passion, and devotes the whole of his energies to the development of his soul ! If only you could enjoy, were it but for the space of two minutes, all the riches God lavishes on the wise man who regards love but as a passing need—a need that lasts for six months when he has reached the age of twenty—and on the wise men who, despising the juicy beef-steaks of Normandy, feed on roots and dried leaves, like wanderers in the desert ! Your heap of blankets would not cover you one moment longer ; away would go your walking-stick, and you would find yourself in heaven ! And there would you find the love that here on earth you sought on a dunghill ; you would hear strains of music more melodious than Rossini's, voices purer than Malibran's. But I must not forget that, after all, I am speaking in the dark, and only from hearsay ; had I not been in Germany about the year 1791, I should have known nothing of all this. Yes, it is true ; man stretches out his hand towards infinity ; there is within him an instinct that makes him turn towards God. God is everything, gives everything, makes us forget everything, and think on Him ; and, so that we may communicate with Him, He has given us the thread of thought.'

Suddenly he stopped, and fixed his eyes on the heavens.

'The poor man is out of his mind !' thought I. 'Sir,' I said aloud, 'I should be letting my devotion for eclectic philosophy run away with me were I to publish ideas of this kind ; they would kill my book. Everything in it has been based either on platonic or on sensual love. Heaven preserve me from concluding the work with social blasphemies such as you have described !

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On the contrary, I must endeavour to return, by some "Pantagruelic" subtlety, to my bachelors and my honest women, and strive to find some reasonable excuse for their follies and their passions. Why, if conjugal peace is to bring us to conclusions so disenchanting and so gloomy, husbands will prefer war.'

'Ah, well! I shall not have to reproach myself for having omitted to point out the road to a wandering traveller.'

'Farewell, old bag of bones!' said I to myself. Farewell, thou wandering marriage! Farewell, gun-powder squib! Farewell, machine! Although from time to time I have given you credit for qualities worthy of my friends, now you may go and rejoin Madame de T—— and all the other women of your acquaintance; you may turn into a sign-post for all I care!

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

CONCLUSION.

A CERTAIN man of the wilderness, who thought he had the gift of prophecy, once bade the people of Israel follow him up into a mountain to hear the mysteries he wished to reveal unto them; so great was the crowd that followed after him that it filled all the roads, and, although he was prophet, his vanity was tickled.

But as the mountain was a great way off, it so happened that, at the first stopping-place, a man remembered that he had a pair of slippers to deliver to a peer of the realm, a woman remembered that she had left her children's soup on the fire, a tax-collector thought of the money he had to gather in, and off they went. A little farther on, two lovers sat down beneath the olive-trees to rest, and forgot the prophet's sermon, for they thought that the promised land was that which

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lay at their feet, and the divine word that which they themselves were uttering.

Fat men with paunches worthy of Sancho, who had for a quarter of an hour been wiping their brows with their silk handkerchiefs, began to realise that they were thirsty, and stopped at a spring by the wayside.

Some old soldiers complained of their corns, and talked of Austerlitz and tight boots.

At the second stopping-place some men of the world whispered to one another :

‘ This prophet is no better than a fool ! ’

‘ Have you ever heard him before ? ’

‘ I ? No. I only came out of curiosity. ’

‘ And I, because I saw others following him. ’ (He was of the fashionable world.)

‘ It is my opinion that he’s a charlatan. ’

Nothing daunted, the prophet walked steadily on. But when he came to a plateau commanding a splendid view of the surrounding country, and turned round, he saw but one poor Israelite ! He might have said to him, as the Prince de Ligne said to the naughty little bandy-legged drummer-boy whom he found standing alone where he had expected to see a whole garrison :

‘ Well, gentlemen, it seems that there is only one of you ! ’

‘ Man of God, who hast followed me so far ! I hope a short peroration will not horrify thee ; I have accompanied thee on thy journey, thinking that thou hast all the time been saying to thyself as I have : Where the devil are we going ? ’

Well, then, dear reader, at this point I should like to ask you what you think about the renewal of the tobacco monopoly, of the exorbitant wine-tax, the tax on the carrying of firearms, on plays, on lottery, on playing-cards, on brandy, soap, silk and cotton goods, and so on.

‘ I think that, since these taxes go to make up a third part of the State revenues, we should be in a very bad way if——’

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‘ You mean, O model husband ! that if no one ever drank, or gambled, or smoked, or hunted, or went shooting—if, in fact, we had neither vice, nor passion, nor disease in France, the State would be on the verge of bankruptcy ; for it would seem that our revenues are mortgaged to the general corruption, just as our trade only thrives upon luxury. If you look closely into the matter, you will see that all taxes are based on some moral disease or other. As a matter of fact, our largest receipts come from insurance policies ; we all of us insure ourselves against any possible change that may occur in our honesty and good faith, and officers of justice make fortunes out of the lawsuits which arise when this good faith is forsworn. To follow out this pleasant little philosophical diversion still further, we should see our policemen deprived of their horses and their buckskin breeches if all the world behaved itself, and there were no such things as fools or lazy people in it. Put a tax on virtue ! There would appear to be a greater similarity between honest women and the budget than I thought, and I will undertake to prove it to you by statistics if you will allow me to finish my book as I have begun it. Will you admit that a lover should put on a clean shirt more often than a husband or an unattached bachelor ? The difference between husband and lover is shown most clearly by the condition of their attire. The one dresses simply, and lets his beard grow, while the other is never seen except when he is “ under arms,” as it were. Sterne has wittily remarked that his laundress’s book is the best memoir Tristram Shandy has left behind him, and that we may judge from the number of shirts he wore during his various adventures which of the latter cost him the most. The laundry book is a lover’s most faithful and impartial historian. A flirt’s “ grand passion ” consumes quite a number of capes, ties, and dresses, for an enormous amount of prestige is owed to the whiteness of one’s stockings, the gloss of one’s collar, the artistic

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fold of one's shirt, the elegance of one's tie. This will explain what was said earlier about an honest woman (see the Second Meditation)—that she spends her life in having her dresses starched. I once asked a lady of my acquaintance how much she thought was spent in satisfying this requirement of love, and I remember that, after fixing it at a hundred francs a year per woman, she said to me, in a confidential tone: "But it really depends on the man, for some are far worse than others."

After a long discussion, in which I stood up for bachelors and the lady for her own sex, we came to the conclusion that two lovers, belonging to the class with which this book has been dealing, spend between them a hundred and fifty francs a year more than they would in times of 'peace.' In another long and amiable discussion of a similar nature, we also agreed that in a time of 'war,' four hundred francs a year more would be spent in dress. Others, friends whom we consulted, considered this a niggardly allowance. Seeing how much light they threw on these delicate matters, we thought it would be a good idea to invite several wise men and women to dinner, and hear their opinions. It was a ticklish business, but, after some brilliant speeches, the following paragraphs from love's budget were sanctioned by the assembly. A sum of a hundred francs was set aside for messengers and carriages; a hundred and fifty francs was voted a reasonable amount for cakes consumed on walks, for bunches of violets, and theatre tickets. Dinners at restaurants consumed two hundred francs. Having passed this as necessary expenditure, we next had to cover it with a receipt. It was during the subsequent discussion that a young 'cheval-léger' (the meeting was held before the King suppressed his 'maison rouge'), half tipsy with champagne, had to be called to order for daring to compare lovers to stills. A subject which gave rise to violent discussion, and, after being adjourned for several weeks, necessitated a special report, was that of presents. At

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the final meeting, Madame de D——, a delicate-looking little woman, was the first speaker. In a charming speech, in which she showed great delicacy of feeling, she endeavoured to prove that, for the most part, love-gifts were of no intrinsic value. I replied that all lovers had their portraits painted. A lady raised the objection that this only occasioned an initial outlay, for a lover always took care to ask for his picture back again, for use in a new suit. Upon this a man from Provence immediately rose to utter a philippic against women in general. He spoke of what he was compelled to call the incredible hunger lovers have for furs, satins and other stuffs, jewellery and furniture ; but a lady, interrupting him, asked if Madame d'O——y, his great friend, had not already twice paid his debts.

‘Certainly not, madame,’ he replied. ‘Her husband paid them.’

He was then called to order, and condemned to treat the company all round, for having used the word ‘husband.’

He was utterly refuted by a lady who asserted that women put far more devotion into their love-affairs than men, that lovers are very costly luxuries, and that an honest woman is lucky if she does not spend more than two thousand a year on one. The discussion then degenerated into mere personalities, and a scrutiny was demanded. The conclusions of the commission were adopted. It was stated that a sum of five hundred francs ought to be put aside yearly for presents, but that this amount should be taken to include (i.) the expenses incurred by little expeditions into the country ; (ii.) the cost of medicine to cure colds caught from walking on damp paths in the park in the evening, or on leaving the theatre ; (iii.) postage and law fees ; (iv.) travelling, and any general expenses not stated in the above list, but that it should not include expense incurred by any act of folly on the part of the lovers. From investigations made by the commission it was

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shown that, for the most part, opera girls reaped the benefit of this expenditure, and not wives. The outcome of the whole discussion was that, taking one with another, a 'passion' cost about fifteen hundred francs a year, to cover the joint expenses of both lovers (not necessarily seven hundred and fifty each, be it observed), and these expenses were only incurred by reason of the 'attachment.' It was unanimously agreed that this figure represented the minimum annual cost. Now, since we have, in our conjugal statistics (see the First, Second, and Third Meditations), proved once and for all that there is in France a 'floating mass' of at least fifteen hundred thousand illegitimate passions, it follows that :—

The illicit intercourse of a third of the population of France contributes a sum of nearly three million francs to the vast sums always in circulation—veritable social 'blood' of which the budget is the heart ;

That an honest woman sacrifices her life not only to the children of the peerage, but also to her country's capital ;

That manufacturers owe their prosperity largely to this 'systolery' movement ;

That an honest woman is essentially a 'consumer' and a spender ;

That the least diminution in love would bring untold misfortune to the treasury and the fundholders ;

That at least a third of a husband's income is mortgaged to his wife's unfaithfulness ; and so on.

I know very well that you are on the point of talking to me about morals and politics, and about good and evil. But, my dear 'minotaurised' one, is not the pursuit of happiness the aim of all of us ? Is not this the reason why kings work such woe upon their people ? An honest woman has no throne, no soldiers, no judges, it is true—but if our four hundred thousand women make a million bachelors happy, and their

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four hundred thousand husbands into the bargain, do they not quietly and unostentatiously attain the end that a Government has ever in view, that of giving the greatest possible happiness to mankind ?

‘ Yes, but there are the worries, the children, the miseries——’

Allow me to quote the consoling words with which one of the wittiest of our satirists closes one of his diatribes : ‘ Man is not perfect.’ As long as the inconveniences which our institutions bestow on us are equalled by the benefits, we need not complain ; for the human race, socially speaking, has to choose not between good and evil but between evil and worse. Now, if this book in any way succeeds in lessening the ‘ worse ’ in matrimonial institutions, by unveiling the errors and misconstructions arising out of our customs and our prejudices, it will certainly have one of the best possible titles to a place among the benefactors of humanity. Have I not, in strengthening the husband’s position, striven to make the wife more reserved and, consequently, more violent in her passion ? Have I not put more money into the Treasury, more life and zest into commerce and agriculture ? Thanks to this final ‘ meditation,’ I can flatter myself that I have completely fulfilled my ‘ eclectic vow,’ and I hope I have reported all the steps in the proceedings, with all the care of an advocate-general, without drawing any conclusions therefrom. As a matter of fact, what would another axiom profit us now ? Is this book to be nothing but a development of Tronchet’s latest notion—Tronchet, who towards the end of his life held it as his opinion that our legislators had considered the children before the husband ? Rather should one hope that it may serve to corroborate what was once said by a priest in a peroration to a sermon preached before Anne of Austria, when he saw that she and her women were writhing under his home-thrusts : ‘ But you are all honest women ; it is we who are unfortunately all sons of Samaria.’

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You may draw your own conclusions—it would be difficult to find two opposite opinions but what either had some right on its side. The book is neither for marriage nor against it; it claims to be an exact description of the married state. If an inspection of the machine leads us to improve the working of the wheels; if, while cleaning a rusty part, we have gained some fresh ideas concerning the mechanism, let credit be given to the workman. If I have had the presumption to enunciate hard truths, if I have argued from the particular to the general more than I should have done, and if I have neglected to resort to the time-honoured practice of lauding women to the skies—may I be hanged! But do not charge me with feelings of hostility to the institution of marriage; my attack is directed only against men and women. I know perfectly well that from the moment that one marriage ceases to prevent another from taking place it is an impregnable institution; and, after all, if so many complaints can be raised against the institution, it is perhaps because man remembers only its evils, and accuses his wife in the same way that he accuses life; for marriage is a life within a life. Yet men, who take their opinions from the daily papers, may speak ill of a book that in their eyes has made too deep a study of the eclectic mania; in that case a peroration is needed, and such it will not be difficult to supply. We opened with some words of Napoleon; and there is no reason why we should not end as we began. At a full State council the First Consul made this overwhelming statement—at once a eulogy and a satire on marriage, as well as a *résumé* of this present work:

‘ If men did not keep watch I would not ask it of women!’

POSTSCRIPT.

‘ And shall you ever marry?’ asked the Duchesse, to whom I had just been reading my manuscript.

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(She was one of the two women to whose wisdom I did homage in the introduction.)

‘Certainly, madame,’ I replied. ‘It is one of my fondest hopes that I may one day come across a woman with courage enough to have me.’

‘Is it a sign of resignation to your fate or of fatuousness?’

‘That is my secret!’

‘Well, *Monsieur le docteur ès arts et sciences conjugales*, permit me to tell you a story of the East which I read the other day in an almanack I take in every year. In the early days of the Empire the fashionable world used to play a game which consisted in always saying the word “Diadesté” whenever anything was received from the hands of the opponent in the game. A game might last for weeks, as you can imagine, and it was considered as playing the game to perfection if one inveigled the other into accepting a trinket without uttering the fatal word.

‘Had it to be said for a kiss?’

‘Certainly. I have won the game twenty times and more with a kiss!’ she said, with a smile.

‘The game is of either Arabian or Chinese origin, and to it we owe the following story:

‘But if I tell it you,’ she said, interrupting herself, and lightly laying her finger against her nose in the most charming way imaginable, ‘you must place it at the end of your book.’

‘And greatly will it enhance its value,’ said I. ‘I am already indebted to you for more than I can ever hope to repay. I accept the condition gladly.’

She smiled mischievously, and continued:

Once upon a time, a philosopher had gathered together in a book all the tricks of which my sex is capable. In self-defence, he carried the book about with him. One day, on one of his journeys, he found himself near an Arab camp. A young woman, seated

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under the shade of a palm-tree, rose quickly at the stranger's approach, and she asked him to rest beneath her tent so graciously that he could not refuse. The lady's husband happened at the time to be away from home.

No sooner was the philosopher seated on the soft carpet of the tent than his kind hostess brought him fresh dates and a bowl of milk ; as she offered him the refreshment, he could not help noticing the beauty of her hands. In order to dispel the feelings that the young woman's charms were beginning to call up in him, the wise man took out his book, and began to write therein. Piqued at his indifference, the attractive creature said to him in most melodious tones :

‘ Your book must indeed be interesting, since it alone seems capable of holding your attention. Would it be too much to ask the name of the science of which it treats ? ’

The philosopher, keeping his eyes fixed on the book, replied :

‘ The subject is one that lies outside woman's province.’

This refusal only increased the woman's curiosity. Slowly she advanced one of the prettiest little feet that ever pressed the sand of the desert. The philosopher was distracted, and, yielding to the temptation, his eye travelled from her feet, which seemed to promise so well, upwards to a still more enchanting bosom, and very soon the flame of his admiration was mingling with the fire of her brilliant black eyes. She again asked him what the book was about, and in so very sweet a voice, that the philosopher, completely conquered by her charms, replied :

‘ I am the author of the book, but the subject I owe to another. It contains a description of all the tricks women have ever played.’

‘ What ! Absolutely *all* ? ’ exclaimed the daughter of the desert.

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‘Yes—all! I can say so confidently, for I have studied women all my life.’

‘Ah!’ said the woman, lowering her long eyelashes.

Then, shooting the brightest of glances on the so-called wise man, she soon made him forget his book and everything else. Behold our philosopher head over ears in love! Thinking that he saw a suspicion of coquetry in the young woman’s behaviour, he risked a declaration of his love. How, indeed, could he have helped it? The sky was of the fairest blue, in the distance the sand shone like pure gold, the very wind of the desert breathed of love, and this woman of Arabia seemed to reflect all the beauty and brilliance of her surroundings; her glorious eyes grew moist, and, by a nod of the head that seemed, as it were, to convey a waving motion to the luminous atmosphere, she consented to hearken to the stranger’s words of love. The wise man was already half-beside himself with joy when the young woman, hearing in the distance the galloping of a horse that seemed as though it were flying towards them, cried out:

‘We are lost! My husband is upon us. He is as jealous as a tiger, and far more pitiless. In the name of the Prophet, if you cherish your life, hide within this box.’

The philosopher, horror-stricken, seeing no other course open to him, got into the box, and the woman, having shut and locked it, went out to meet her husband. After putting him in a good humour with a tender kiss, she said:

‘I must tell you of a very strange adventure!’

‘I am listening, my dear gazelle,’ replied the Arab, seating himself, in Oriental fashion, cross-legged on a mat.

‘There came to me to-day a kind of philosopher, who pretended that he had collected together in a book all the tricks my sex has ever played, and the false sage spoke words of love to me!’

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‘ Well ? ’ cried the Arab.

‘ And I listened ! ’ she replied coolly. ‘ He was young, ardent, and—you came in the nick of time.’

At this the Arab leaped up like a young lion, and, raging with anger, drew his kandjar. The philosopher, who from the box could hear all that passed, offered up to Arimana his book and all the men and women of stony Arabia.

‘ Fatima ! ’ cried the husband, ‘ if you desire to live, answer me : where is the traitor ? ’

Terrified at the storm she had raised, Fatima threw herself at her husband’s feet, and, trembling beneath his threatening dagger, cast a frightened glance at the box. She then rose, and, shamefacedly taking the key from her girdle, handed it to her jealous husband ; but, at the very moment of his stooping to open the box, the wicked creature burst into a peal of laughter.

Faroun stayed his hand, and looked rather uneasily at his wife.

‘ You never said “ Diadesté,” ’ she cried, jumping for joy. ‘ You have lost—you have lost, and I shall have my beautiful gold chain ! Give it to me quick ! ’

The husband dropped the key, and handed her the chain on bended knee, offering his dear Fatima all the jewels of all the caravans that might pass during the year, if she would promise never again to play such a cruel trick to win the game of ‘ Diadesté.’ Then, being an Arab, and not liking to lose a gold chain, even to his wife, he remounted his steed, and rode away to the desert to grumble at his leisure, for he loved Fatima too well to let her see that he regretted the chain.

The young wife dragged the philosopher from the box more dead than alive, and said to him seriously :

‘ Do not, my dear philosopher, forget to add this to your collection.’

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‘ Madame,’ said I to the Duchesse, ‘ I understand. If I marry, I shall no doubt, sooner or later, fall a prey to some devilry or other. But I shall, in that case, you may be sure, have a model household to hold up to the admiration of my friends.’

FINIS

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